

# **The Book of Abraham: Criticisms, Defenses, and Implications**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to explore the criticisms and defenses of the Book of Abraham as well as the broader implications of these issues as they relate to Joseph Smith's claim of being a prophet, seer, revelator, and translator of ancient languages. A close examination of these issues can become confusing and complex without visual references. Therefore, this paper was created to include as many visual aids as possible in order for these issues to be understandable.

In 1835, four mummies and some Egyptian papyri were brought to Kirtland, Ohio by Michael Chandler to be exhibited. Joseph Smith examined the papyri and declared that he was able to translate them. Members of the church subsequently purchased the mummies and papyri. Smith declared, "...with W.W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc., — a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them. Truly we can say, the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth."<sup>1</sup>

The papyri contained two forms of Egyptian writing – hieroglyphics, which look like small pictures, and hieratic characters, which look like cursive. Very few to none of the academics in the United States would have been able to translate them in 1835. The ability to decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics had only just been achieved in Europe in 1822. By 1835, scholars who had the ability to translate hieroglyphics were still very scarce.

Smith declared that the papyri contained the actual handwriting of the ancient patriarchs Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. Smith translated three “facsimiles” from the papyri, created an Egyptian Alphabet, and produced the text of the Book of Abraham. In 1842, Smith published the Book of Abraham and facsimiles in the church's Times and Seasons newspaper. After his death, the church canonized the Book of Abraham in 1880.

The Book of Abraham is the only scripture in the Mormon canon for which the source is still available for examination.<sup>2</sup> Scholars, therefore, can translate the papyri and compare it to Smith's translation. As such, the Book of Abraham serves as the ultimate evidence for determining whether Smith truly was a prophet of God as he claimed to be.

One might wonder, then, why the church does not shout from the rooftops that it has the papyri and Smith's translations of them which prove that Smith had the prophetic gift of translation. The reason the church does not advertise this is because Smith's translations were entirely incorrect. Thus, the existence of the papyri and translations serves instead to prove the opposite – that Smith was not the prophet he claimed to be.

The relevant documents that will be discussed in this paper are as follows:

- Egyptian Alphabets (EAs) (**Fig. 1**)<sup>3</sup>:
  - These are documents prepared by Smith and his scribes in an attempt to create a translation of characters taken from the papyri.
  - There are four copies of the EAs:
    - EA-JS – written by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery<sup>4</sup>
    - EA-OC - written by Oliver Cowdery<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://byustudies.byu.edu/hc/hcpgs/hc.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Of all the scripture produced by Smith, the Book of Abraham and Book of Mormon stand alone as coming from a source other than pure inspiration from God. The source of the Book of Mormon, gold plates, no longer exists on the earth as Smith claims that the plates were taken back into heaven by an angel. Therefore, the Book of Abraham remains as the only Mormon scripture for which the source, the papyri, still exists.

<sup>3</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>4</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/egyptian-alphabet-js-and-oliver-cowdery-scribe-circa-july-circa-december-1835>

- EA-WWP - written by William W Phelps<sup>6</sup>
- EA-GAEL – written by William W Phelps, but at a later time than the preceding three, and it covers different characters than the preceding three cover.<sup>7</sup>
- Book of Abraham Manuscripts (**Fig. 2**)<sup>8</sup>:
  - These are manuscripts in which the text of the Book of Abraham was recorded.
  - There are five Book of Abraham manuscripts:
    - 1a – Written by Fredrick G. Williams (contains verses 1:4-2:6)<sup>9</sup>
    - 1b – Written by Warren Parrish (contains verses 1:4-2:2)<sup>10</sup>
    - 2 – Written by William W Phelps and Warren Parrish (contains verses 1:1-2:18)<sup>11</sup>
    - 3a – Written by Willard Richards ( contains verses 1:1-2:18)<sup>12</sup>
    - 3b – Written by Willard Richards (contains verses 3:18-26)<sup>13</sup>
  - Manuscripts 1a, 1b, and 2 are manuscripts written in 1835. Manuscripts 3a and 3b were not written until 1842.
- Rediscovered Papyri (**Fig. 3**)<sup>14</sup>:
  - Smith acquired some Egyptian papyri in 1835 which he claimed included the Book of Abraham and the Book of Joseph. It was assumed for many decades that the papyri were lost in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.
  - In 1966, however, 10 pieces of the Joseph Smith papyri were discovered in the New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. An 11<sup>th</sup> fragment was discovered in church archives.
  - The 11 pieces<sup>15</sup> were numbered and make up parts of three different scrolls:
    - Book of the Dead belonging to lady Tshenmin: 7, 8, 5, 6, 4, 2
    - Breathing Permit belonging to the priest Hor: 1, 10, 11
    - The Book of the Dead belonging to Amon-Re Neferinub: 3a, 3b
    - Unknown: 9
- Missing Papyri (**Fig. 4**)<sup>16</sup>:
  - A total of three facsimiles were drawn and eventually printed in the Book of Abraham. Only the first was found among the rediscovered papyri. Therefore, we know there were two others but the papyri containing them remain missing.
  - The missing facsimiles are as follows:
    - Facsimile 2: This is a hypocephalus which was part of the Book of the Dead belonging to Sheshonk.
    - Facsimile 3: This is part of the Breathing Permit belonging to Hor. Much of the Breathing Permit of Hor scroll was rediscovered but this piece was not.

<sup>5</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/egyptian-alphabet-oliver-cowdery-scribe-circa-july-circa-december-1835>

<sup>6</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/egyptian-alphabet-william-w-phelps-scribe-circa-july-circa-december-1835>

<sup>7</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/grammar-and-alphabet-of-the-egyptian-language-circa-july-circa-december-1835>

<sup>8</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>9</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/frederick-g-williams-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-circa-october-1835-abraham-14-26>

<sup>10</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-fall-1835-abraham-14-22>

<sup>11</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

<sup>12</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/willard-richards-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-early-1842-a-abraham-11-218>

<sup>13</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/willard-richards-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-early-1842-b-abraham-318-26>

<sup>14</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>; [http://www.bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA\\_4.html](http://www.bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA_4.html)

<sup>15</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/egyptian-papyri>

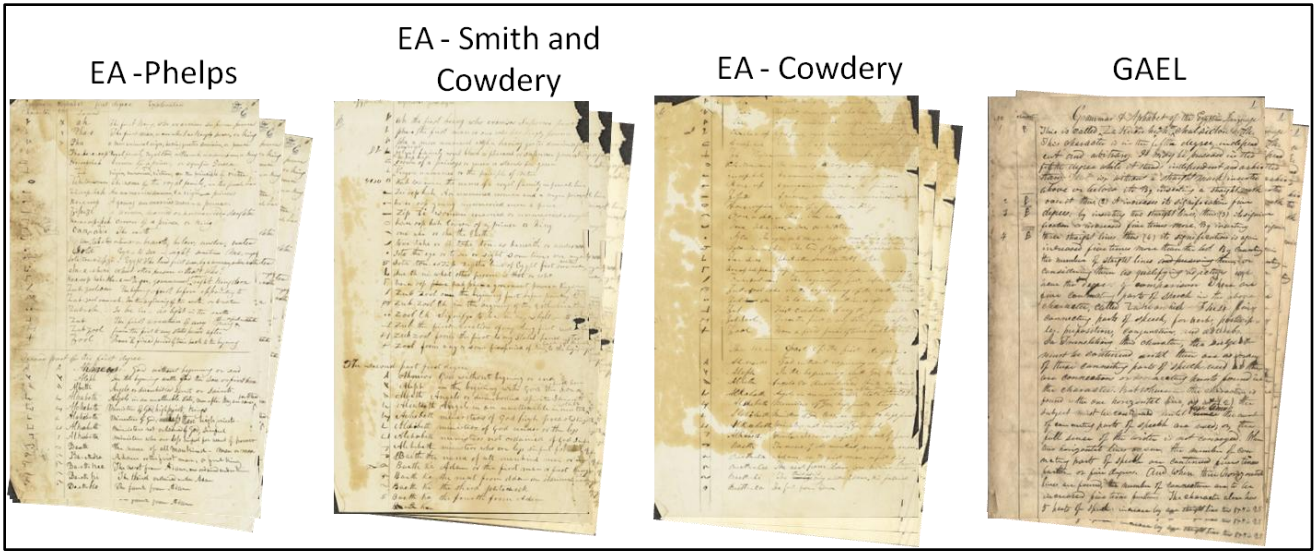
<sup>16</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

- Another part of the Breathing Permit of Hor is missing. This section would fit between the Breathing Permit of Hor papyrus we do have and Facsimile 3 which would have appeared at the end of the scroll.
- A fragment from the Book of the Dead belonging to Amenhotep.
  - We know this papyrus existed because characters from it appear in a document written by Smith's scribes titled "Valuable Discovery of hidden [sic] records."<sup>17</sup>

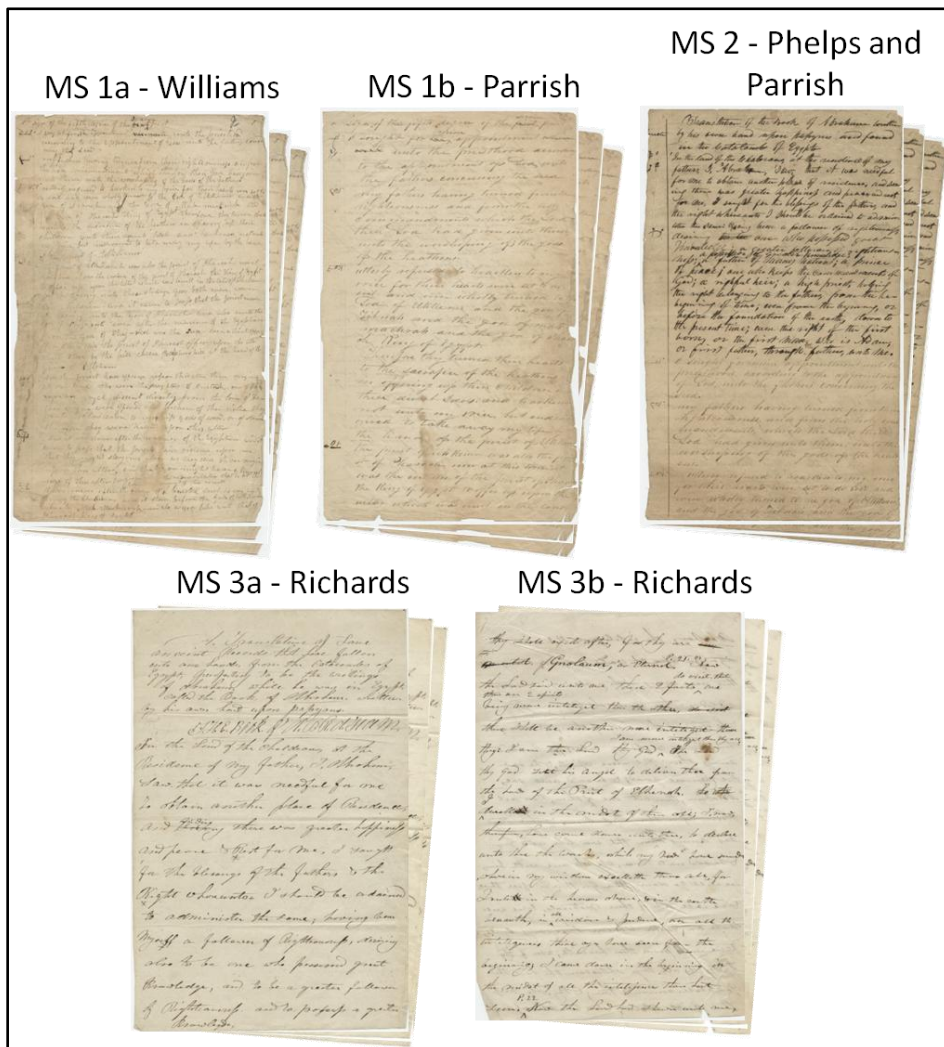
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<sup>17</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/valuable-discovery-of-hidden-records-circa-july-circa-december-1835>

**Figure 1: Egyptian Alphabet Copies**



**Figure 2: Book of Abraham Manuscripts**



**Figure 3: Rediscovered Papyri**

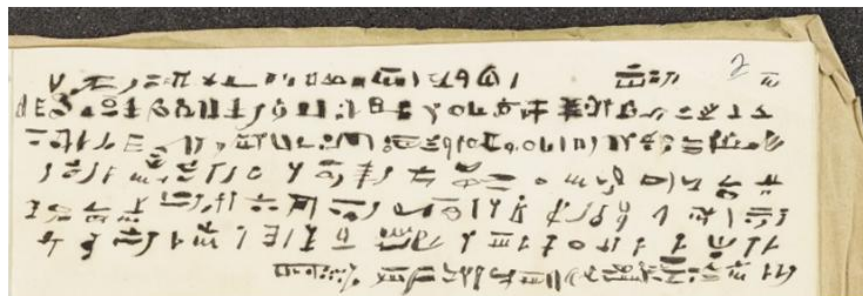


**Figure 4: Missing Papyri**

Facsimile 2: Hypocephalus from the Book of the Dead belonging to Sheshonk



Book of the Dead belonging to Amenhotep (these are characters copied from that fragment)



Facsimile 3: The Breathing Permit of Hor (this is the end of the Breathing Permit Scroll)



Missing portion of the Breathing Permit of Hor





## **II. THE PAPYRI'S AGE PROVES THAT THEY CANNOT CONTAIN ABRAHAM'S WRITING AS SMITH CLAIMED**

Smith claimed throughout his life that the characters on the papyri were written by Abraham. Even the church has admitted that this is impossible.

### **A. Smith Declared that the Characters on the Papyri were Written by Abraham**

The 1835 Book of Abraham Manuscript MS 2 begins with a one-sentence introduction: "Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the CataCombs of Egypt."<sup>18</sup>

Beginning with the first publication of the Book of Abraham in the March 1, 1842 edition of the church's Times and Seasons newspaper and in every edition since, the Book of Abraham has always included an introduction like this one indicating the characters on the papyri were literally written by Abraham himself.<sup>19</sup>

Smith would also tell visitors that the papyri contained Abraham's signature. In April 1844, Josiah Quincy, Jr., whose father was president of Harvard University and a former member of the US House of Representatives, and Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy Adams who was the sixth President of the United States, visited Smith while traveling. Smith showed Quincy and Adams the papyri and Quincy wrote,

"Some parchments inscribed with hieroglyphics were then offered us. They were preserved under glass and handled with great respect. 'That is the handwriting of Abraham, the Father of the Faithful,' said the prophet."<sup>20</sup>

Adams similarly wrote,

"He then took us down into his mother's chamber and showed us four Egyptian mummies stripped and then undertook to explain the contents of a chart or manuscript which he said had been taken from the bosom of one of them. The cool impudence of this imposture amused me very much. 'This,' said he, 'was written by the hand of Abraham and means so and so. If anyone denies it, let him prove the contrary. *I say it is.*' Of course, we were too polite to prove the negative, against a man fortified by revelation." (emphasis in the original)<sup>21</sup>

Another one of Smith's visitors had a similar experience and wrote,

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<sup>18</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

<sup>19</sup> The introduction in every edition has been nearly identical. For a list of the introductions for almost every edition, see <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/faithpromotingrumor/2013/03/adjustment-to-the-book-of-abraham-in-the-new-edition-of-the-scriptures/>; Also see Section VII-B.

<sup>20</sup> <https://archive.org/stream/figurespastfrom00quingooq#page/n396/mode/2up>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/25080384?uid=3739560&uid=2134&uid=2129&uid=368683361&uid=2&uid=70&uid=3&uid=368683351&uid=3739256&uid=60&purchase-type=article&accessType=none&sid=21102877427681&showMyJstorPss=false&seq=19&showAccess=false>

“He then walked to a secretary, on the opposite side of the room, and drew out several frames, covered with glass, under which were numerous fragments of Egyptian papyrus, on which, as usual, a great variety of hieroglyphical characters had been imprinted. These ancient records, said he, throw great light upon the subject of Christianity. They have been unrolled and preserved with great labour and care. My time has hitherto been too much taken up to translate the whole of them, but I will show you how I interpret certain parts. *There*, said he, pointing to a particular character, that is the signature of the patriarch Abraham. It is indeed a most interesting autograph, I replied, and doubtless the only one extant. – What an ornament it would be to have these ancient manuscripts handsomely set, in appropriate frames, and hung up around the walls of the temple which you are about to erect in this place. Yes, replied the prophet, and *the translation* hung up with them.” (emphasis in the original)<sup>22</sup>

### **B. The Papyri Date to at Least 1,000 Years After Abraham’s Lifetime**

Scholars believe Abraham lived between 2400 BC and 1500 BC. The papyri, however, have been dated to no later than 500 BC and the Breathing Permit of Hor specifically to no later than 150 BC.<sup>23</sup> The church itself published in the Ensign, “from paleographic and historical considerations, the [Breathing Permit] papyrus can reliably be dated to around A.D. 60—much too late for Abraham to have written it.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, even by the church’s own admission, the papyri dates to at least 1,000-1,900 years after Abraham’s lifetime and thus could not have been written in the “handwriting of Abraham,” “by his own hand,” and “sign[ed by] the patriarch Abraham” as Smith claimed.

Not only was Smith wrong about the age of the papyri and the author of the writing on the papyri, Smith’s translation of the papyri was also incorrect.

## **III. SMITH’S TRANSLATION OF THE FACSIMILES WAS INCORRECT**

Smith translated three vignettes from the papyri which he called “facsimiles”. According to both LDS and non-LDS Egyptologists, his translations were completely wrong. Two of the three facsimiles were damaged when Smith received them and he subsequently restored them. His restorations were also completely wrong.

### **A. Numerous Egyptologists Have Examined the Facsimiles and Declared Smith’s Translation to be Incorrect**

As discussed in the introduction, when Smith translated the papyri in 1835 there were very few to no scholars in the United States who knew how to translate Egyptian hieroglyphics and hieratic characters. Certainly Smith did not know how to translate such nor did he have an Egyptian-English dictionary to aid him in his translation since none existed at the time. Instead, Smith claimed to have translated by using the power of God given to him as a true prophet.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://archive.org/stream/friendreligious1183940smit#page/342/mode/2up>

<sup>23</sup> Papyri dated no later than 500 BC - [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N02\\_69.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N02_69.pdf); Breathing Permit dated to no later than 150 BC - [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V33N04\\_131.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N04_131.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Breathing Permit dated to no later than 60 AD - <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1988/07/i-have-a-question>

After the Book of Abraham was first published in 1842, Apostle Franklin D. Richards compiled different teachings of Joseph Smith, including the Book of Abraham, for publication as the “Pearl of Great Price.” It was compiled in 1851 and was intended to provide the British saints with additional teachings of Joseph Smith. A copy of the 1851 Pearl of Great Price found its way to a French Egyptologist named Theodule Deveria. By this time, Egyptian hieroglyphics and hieratic characters were becoming more widely translatable. Deveria recognized the three facsimiles as funerary documents and provided a translation. Deveria’s translation of the facsimiles was wildly different from Smith’s.<sup>25</sup>

In 1912, Reverend Franklin S. Spaulding, an Episcopal Bishop of Utah, sent the Book of Abraham facsimiles to eight scholars across Europe and the United States to inquire of their opinions of the accuracy of Smith’s translation. The eight scholars unanimously agreed that Smith’s translations were completely wrong.<sup>26</sup>

"The ‘Book of Abraham,’ it is hardly necessary to say, is a pure fabrication. Cuts 1 and 3 are inaccurate copies of well known scenes on funeral papyri, and cut 2 is a copy of one of the magical discs which in the late Egyptian period were placed under the heads of mummies....Joseph Smith's interpretation of these cuts is a farrago of nonsense from beginning to end. Egyptian characters can now be read almost as easily as Greek, and five minutes' study in an Egyptian gallery of any museum should be enough to convince any educated man of the clumsiness of the imposture." (F.S. Spaulding, *Joseph Smith Jr., As a Translator*, 1912, p. 27)

- Dr. Arthur Mace, Assistant Curator for the Department of Egyptian Art of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York

"It is difficult to deal seriously with Joseph Smith's impudent fraud. His fac-simile from the Book of Abraham No. 2 is an ordinary hypocephalus, but the hieroglyphics upon it have been copied so ignorantly that hardly one of them is correct. I need scarcely say that Kolob, etc., are unknown to the Egyptian language. Number 3 is a representation of the Goddess Maat leading the Pharaoh before Osiris, behind whom Smith has turned the Goddess into a king and Osiris into Abraham. The hieroglyphics, again, have been transformed into unintelligible lines. Hardly one of them is copied correctly."

- Dr. A. H. Sayce from Oxford, England

"I have examine the illustrations given in the ‘Pearl of Great Price.’ In the first place, they are copies (very badly done) of Egyptian subjects of which I have dozens of examples. Secondly, they are centuries later than Abraham....To anyone with knowledge of the large class of funeral documents to which these belong, the attempts to guess a meaning for them, in the professed explanations, are too absurd to be noticed. It may be safely said that there is not one single word that is true in these explanations. If anyone wishes to verify the matter, they have only to ask any of the curators of Egyptian museums...or any one else who knows the subject. None but the ignorant could possibly be imposed on by such ludicrous blunders." (Ibid., p. 24)

- Dr. Flinders Petrie of London University

"[T]he three fac-similes in question represent equipment which will be and has been found in unnumbered thousands of Egyptian graves....The point, then, is that in publishing these

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<sup>25</sup> Deveria translated the facsimiles in 1856. They were subsequently published in French in 1860 and finally in English in the 1861 book, “A Journey to Great Salt Lake City.” <https://archive.org/stream/journeytogreatsa02remy#page/540/mode/2up> ; His translation was again published in the 1873 book, “The Rocky Mountain Saints,” <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924029474073#page/n551/mode/2up>

<sup>26</sup> <https://archive.org/details/josephsmithjrast00spala>

fac-similes of Egyptian documents as part of an unique revelation to Abraham, Joseph Smith was attributing to Abraham not three unique documents of which no other copies exist, but was attributing to Abraham a series of documents which were the common property of a whole nation of people who employed them in every human burial, which they prepared.”

- Dr. James H. Breasted of the Haskell Oriental Museum, University of Chicago

"The plates contained in the "Pearl of Great Price" are rather comical and a very poor imitation of Egyptian originals, apparently not of any one original, but of Egyptian originals in general. . . . The text of this chapter, as also the interpretation of the plates, displays an amusing ignorance. Chaldeans and Egyptians are hopelessly mixed together, although as dissimilar and remote in language, religion and locality as are today American and Chinese. In addition to which the writer knows nothing of either of them."

-Dr. John Peters, University of Pennsylvania, in charge of expedition to Babylonia, 1888 - 1895

"After examining 'The Pearl of Great Price,' by Joseph Smith. . . and in particular the three fac-similes, Nos. 1, 2, and 3, I am convinced that the following are facts. . . 3. That the author knew neither the Egyptian language nor the meaning of the most commonplace Egyptian figures; neither did any of those, whether human or Divine, who may have helped him in his interpretation, have any such knowledge. . . . In general, it may be remarked that his explanations from a scientific and scholarly standpoint are absurd. . . . [T]he explanatory notes to his fac-similes cannot be taken seriously by any scholar, as they seem to be undoubtedly the work of pure imagination."

- Rev. Prof. C.A.B. Mercer, Ph.D., Western Theological Seminary, Custodian Hibbard Collection, Egyptian Reproductions.

"The Egyptian papyrus which Smith declared to be the 'Book of Abraham,' and 'translated' or explained in his fantastical way, and of which three specimens are published in the 'Pearl of Great Price,' are parts of the well known 'Book of the Dead.'"

-Dr. Edward Meyer, University of Berlin

"Jos. Smith certainly never got a Divine revelation in the meaning of the ancient Egyptian Script, and [ ] he never deciphered hieroglyphic texts at all."

-Dr. Friedrich Freiherr Von Bissing, Professor of Egyptology in the University of Munich

Since 1912, numerous other Egyptologists have examined the facsimiles and have similarly concluded that Smith's translations are completely wrong.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Egyptologist Klaus Baer - [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N03\\_111.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N03_111.pdf); Egyptologist Robert Ritner - [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V33N04\\_107.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N04_107.pdf); Mormon Egyptologist Edward Ashment - [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V33N04\\_131.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N04_131.pdf), and <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>; and Mormon Egyptologist Stephen Thompson - [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

## B. Facsimile 1: Translated Incorrectly

Facsimile 1 is Smith's copy of the vignette that appears on fragment 1 of the rediscovered papyri. (**Fig. 3**<sup>28</sup>, **Fig. 6**<sup>29</sup>). Fragment 1, also known as the "Facsimile 1 fragment," appeared at the beginning of the Breathing Permit of Hor scroll.

### 1. Incorrect Translation of the Figures and Characters in Facsimile 1

**Figure 5**<sup>30</sup> compares Smith's translation of Facsimile 1 to Egyptologists' translations of Facsimile 1. According to Egyptologists, the Facsimile 1 fragment is the beginning of the Breathing Permit scroll belonging to the priest Hor. Hor is the deceased person for whom it was made. A Breathing Permit, also known as a Book of Breathing, was a common Egyptian funerary document buried with the deceased. The purpose of the Breathing Permit was to ensure a blessed afterlife. It acted as a sort of official passport to the next life. As can be seen in **Figure 5**<sup>31</sup>, Smith's translation of the characters and objects in Facsimile 1 is incorrect.

### 2. Incorrect Translation of the Hieroglyphics Surrounding Facsimile 1

**Figure 6**<sup>32</sup> shows the Facsimile 1 vignette as it appears on the papyrus, surrounded by four columns of hieroglyphics. **Figure 7**<sup>33</sup> provides a translation of the hieroglyphics.<sup>3435</sup> A translation of the hieroglyphics yields no mention of anything in Smith's translation of Facsimile 1 (for example, references to Abraham).

### 3. Incorrect Restoration of Facsimile 1

When Smith obtained the Breathing Permit of Hor scroll, it was damaged. Consequently, parts of the scroll, including the part from which Facsimile 1 was taken, contained some torn out portions. Smith filled in these missing portions on the Facsimile 1 fragment for publication. In the official History of the Church, Smith's entry from March 1, 1842 says, "During the forenoon I was at my office and the printing office, correcting the first plate or cut of the records of Father Abraham, prepared by Reuben Hedlock, for the *Times and Seasons*...."<sup>36</sup>

Smith's restoration of Facsimile 1 was incorrect. **Figure 6**<sup>37</sup> shows the Facsimile 1 fragment with the missing sections drawn in. **Figure 8**<sup>38</sup> shows a comparison between Facsimile 1 as Smith restored it and how Facsimile 1 should appear if it had been restored correctly.<sup>39</sup>

There are four problems with Smith's restoration:

<sup>28</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>; [http://www.bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA\\_4.html](http://www.bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA_4.html)

<sup>29</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/book-of-abraham-facsimile-1-examined.html>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/book-of-abraham-facsimile-1-examined.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>33</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.utlm.org/other/robertritnerpapyriarticle.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Note that there was fifth column originally which has now been lost. The translation has still been provided, however, as the fifth column can be restored by comparing it to other Breathing Permits.

<sup>36</sup> History of the church 4:519, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/hc/hcpgs/hc.aspx>; Reuben Hedlock was an Engraver tasked with making woodcuts of the facsimiles so that they could be printed.

<sup>37</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>

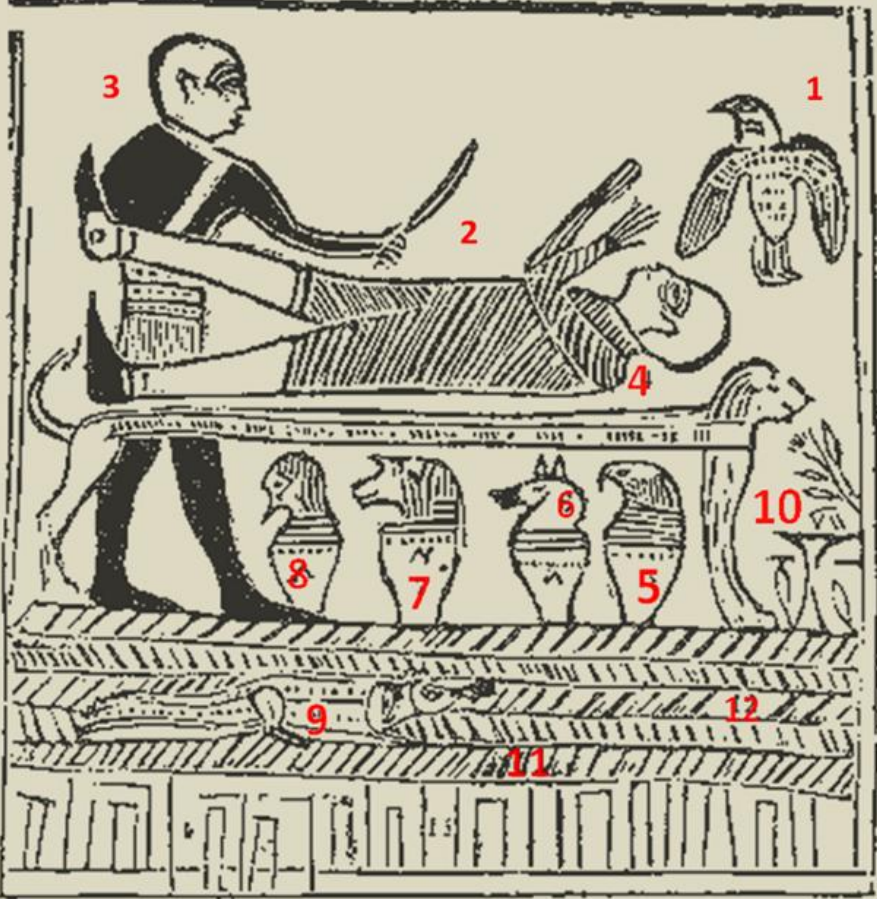
<sup>39</sup> <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>

- The missing head of Anubis (the standing character) should be that of a jackal, not of a man. The figure is the jackal-headed god Anubis. Egyptologists state that this restoration is definitely incorrect.
- The top hand of the deceased should not be there. Instead, it should be the edge of the wing of a bird. According to Egyptologists, this restoration is likely incorrect.
- The head of the bird should not be that of a bird, it should be the head of a man. Egyptologists state that this restoration is very likely incorrect.
- Finally, Anubis should not be holding a knife. Egyptologists believe that this restoration, too, is likely wrong.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

**Figure 5: Translation of Facsimile 1**

Joseph Smith's Interpretation	Modern Egyptological Interpretation	Translated Correctly? Facsimile #1, Book of Abraham
The Angel of the Lord.	1 The spirit or "ba" of Hôr (The deceased fellow)	
Abraham fastened upon an altar	2 The deceased: His name was "Hôr"	
The idolatrous priest of Elkenah	3 Anubis (see original image, this figure was originally portrayed with the head of a Jackal)	
The altar for sacrifice by the idolatrous priests, standing before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and Pharaoh.	4 A common funereal bier or "lion couch"	
The idolatrous god of Elkenah.	5	
The idolatrous god of Libnah.	6 Canopic jars containing the deceased's internal organs.	
The idolatrous god of Mahmackrah.	7	
The idolatrous god of Korash.	8	
The idolatrous god of Pharaoh.	9 This is the god "Horus"	
Abraham in Egypt	10 A libation table bearing wines, oils, etc. Common in Egypt.	
Designed to represent the pillars of heaven, as understood by the Egyptians.	11 A palace façade, called a "serekh"	
Raukeeyang, signifying expanse, or the firmament over our heads; but in this case, in relation to this subject, the Egyptians meant it to signify Shaumau, to be hig, or the heavens, answering to the Hebrew word, Shaumahyeen.	12 This is just the water that the crocodile swims in.	

Joseph Smith's Interpretation available @ [lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr/fac-1](http://lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr/fac-1)  
 Modern Egyptological Interpretation compiled @ [bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA\\_6.html](http://bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA_6.html)  
 LDS apologist explanation @ [en.fairmormon.org/Book\\_of\\_Abraham/Joseph\\_Smith\\_Papyri/Facsimiles/Facsimile\\_1](http://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Abraham/Joseph_Smith_Papyri/Facsimiles/Facsimile_1)

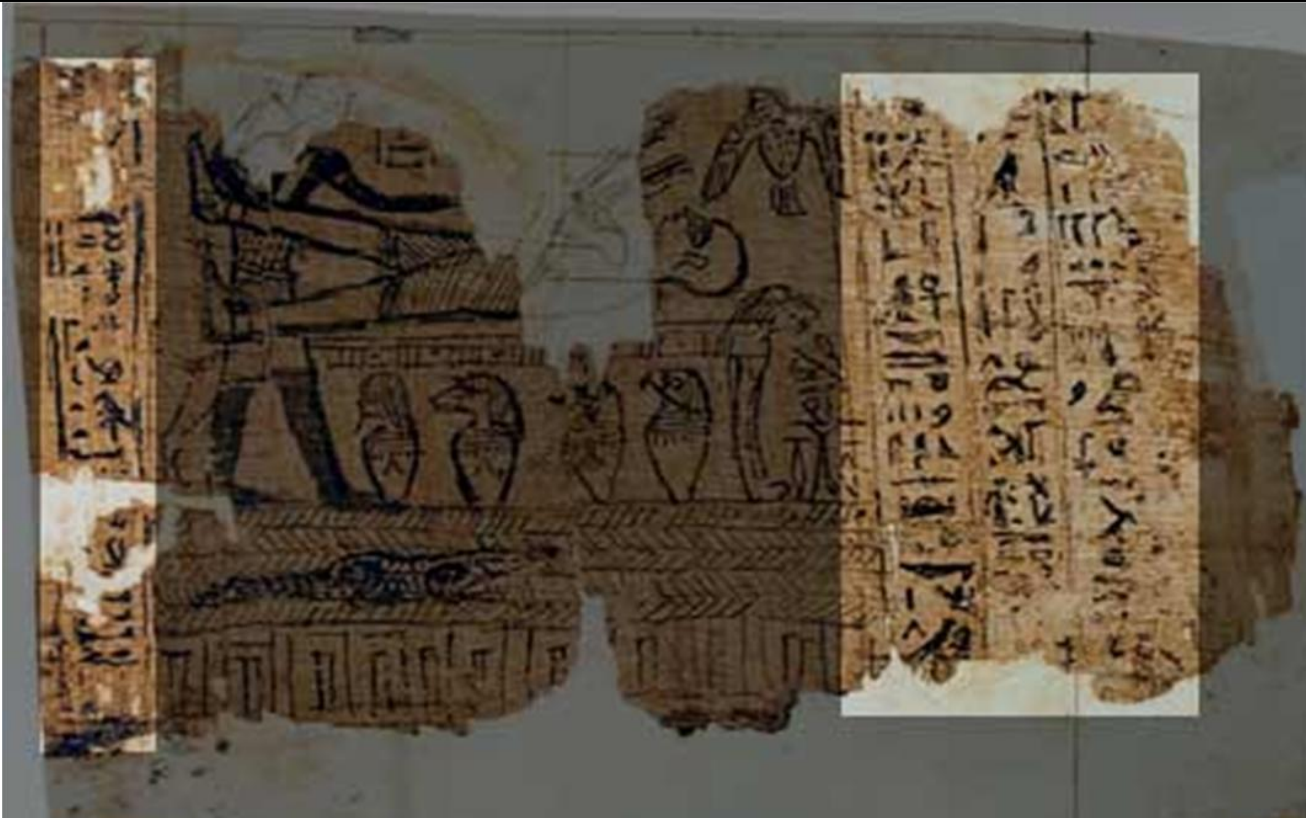


**Figure 6: Beginning of the Breathing Permit - Figures and Objects (Facsimile 1) Surrounded by Hieroglyphics**





**Figure 7: Translation of the Hieratic Characters Surrounding Facsimile 1**



Column 1: [Osiris, the god's father], prophet of Amon-Re, King of the Gods, prophet of Min who slaughters his enemies, prophet of Khonsu, the [one who exercises] authority in Thebes,

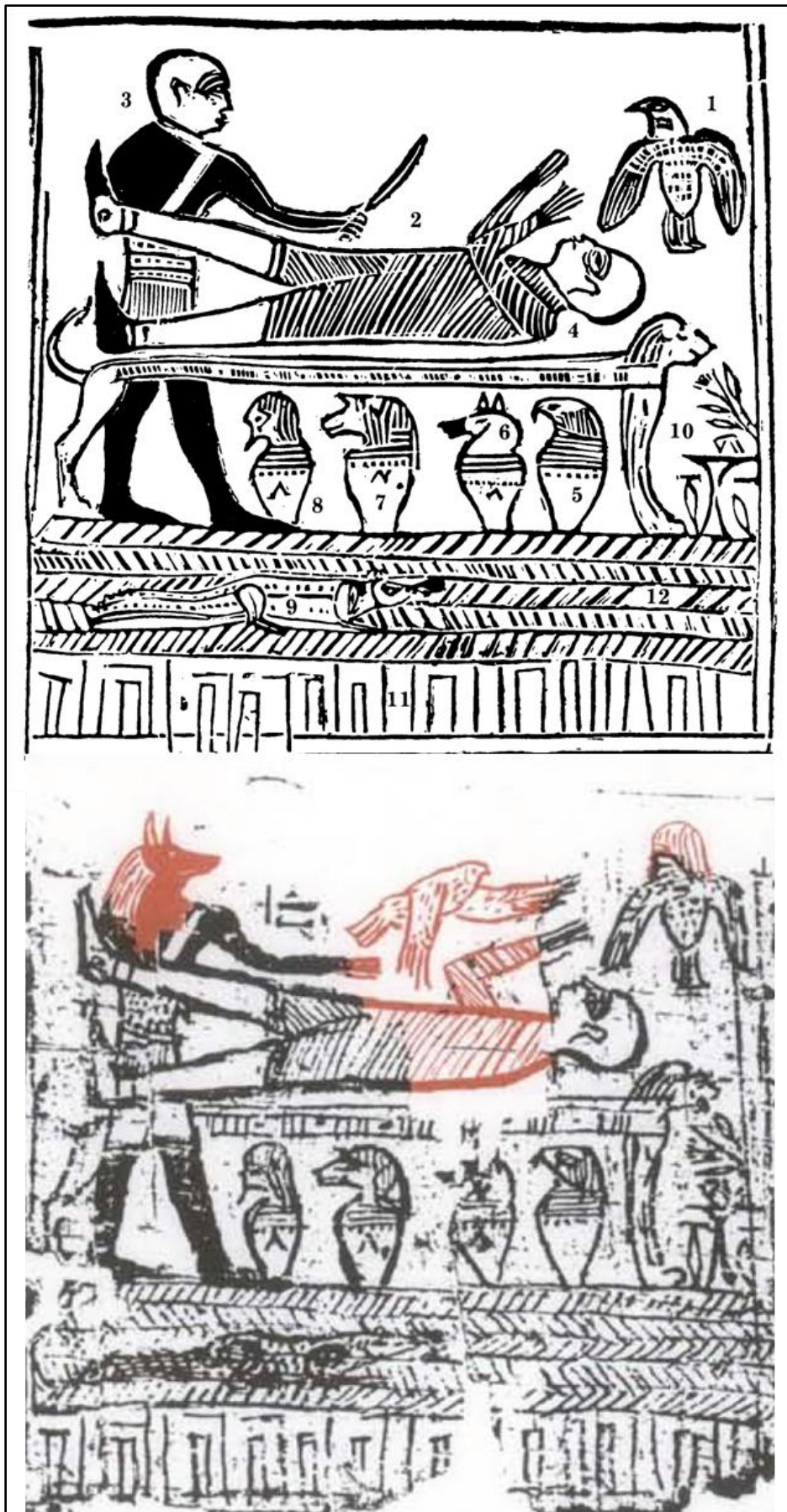
Column 2: [. . .] . . . Hor, the justified, son of the similarly titled overseer of secrets and purifier of the god, Osorwer, the justified, born by the [housewife and sistrum-player of ]

Column 3: [Amon]-Re, Taikhibit, the justified! May your ba-spirit live among them, and may you be buried on the west [of Thebes]."

Column 4: ["O Anubis(?),51 . . .] justification(?).

Column 5: [May you give to him] a good and splendid burial on the west of Thebes as on the mountains of Ma[nu](?).

Figure 8: Comparison of Facsimile 1 Restoration and Correct Restoration



### C. Facsimile 2: Translated Incorrectly

Facsimile 2 is a copy of a hypocephalus which was part of the Book of the Dead belonging to a person named Sheshonk. This was not part of the Breathing Permit of Hor. This fragment was also not part of the rediscovered papyri and remains missing. Hypocephali are a disc shaped document which were commonly placed under the heads of mummies. A correct translation of Facsimile 2 reveals that it has nothing to do with Abraham. Also, as discussed earlier, it was not created until at least 1,000-1,900 years after Abraham's lifetime.

#### 1. Incorrect Translation of the Figures and Characters in Facsimile 2

Smith provided a translation of Facsimile 2 which can be compared to Egyptologists' translations of the facsimile. (**Fig. 9**)<sup>41</sup>. As can be seen in **Figure 9**<sup>42</sup>, Smith's translation is completely wrong. One particularly absurd translation is number 7 which Smith says is "God sitting on his throne" but is in fact the pagan god of fertility, Min, with an erect penis.

#### 2. Incorrect Restoration of Facsimile 2

Like the scroll of the Breathing Permit of Hor, the papyrus from which Facsimile 2 was taken was also damaged and thus had missing portions. Even without having the actual hypocephalus, it is clear that it was damaged because 1) an original drawing of it shows missing portions, and 2) Smith's restoration of these missing portions was done incorrectly.

An early drawing of Facsimile 2, probably dating to 1842, shows the missing portions of the hypocephalus. (**Fig. 10**).<sup>43</sup> Note the grey squiggles drawn in the missing portions. When the Book of Abraham, including the facsimiles, was first published in the Times and Seasons newspaper in 1842, Smith was in charge of overseeing the filling in, or restoration, of the missing portions of the facsimiles. Smith's March 4, 1842 entry in the official History of the Church states,

"At my office exhibiting the Book of Abraham in the original to Brother Reuben Hedlock, so that he might take the size of the several plates or cuts, and prepare the blocks for the *Times and Seasons*; and also gave instruction concerning the arrangement of the writing on the large cut [Facsimile 2], illustrating the principles of astronomy, with other general business."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/book-of-abraham-facsimile-2-examined.html>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/book-of-abraham-facsimile-2-examined.html>

<sup>43</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>44</sup> History of the Church 4:543, <https://byustudies.byu.edu/hc/hcpgs/hc.aspx>; Reuben Hedlock was an Engraver tasked with making woodcuts of the facsimiles so that they could be printed in the Times and Seasons.

**Figure 9: Translation of Facsimile 2**

Joseph Smith's Interpretation	Modern Egyptological Interpretation	Translated Correctly? Facsimile #2, Book of Abraham
Kolob, The residence of God	1 The god Khnumu.	
Stands next to Kolob	2 "Amun-Re", god with two faces representing rising & setting sun.	
God sitting on his throne, clothed with power and authority	3 "Horus-Re" riding in his boat	
Raukeyyang; also the number 1,000; The measuring of time of Oliblish	4 Represents Sokar, not a number	
Enish-go-on-dosh; a governing planet	5 Cow of Hathor, behind which stands a uzat-headed goddess holding a sacred tree.	
Represents this earth in it's four quarters	6 The four (4) sons of Horus, they can represent the four cardinal points of earth	
God sitting on his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-words of the Priesthood	7 The god "Min", an ithyphallic god; that is, a sexually aroused male deity.	
Contains writings that can only be revealed in the temple.	8 "grant that the soul of Osiris Shechonk may live."	
Ought not to be revealed at the present time.	9 "the netherworld (below the earth) and his great waters"	
	10 "O might god, lord of heaven and earth"	
	11 "O god of the sleeping ones from the time of creation" (Read in order 11, 10, 9, 8)	
Will be given in the own due time of the Lord	12 "near" and "wrap"	
	13 "which made by"	
	14 "breathings"	
	15 "this book"	
	16 "and may this soul and its possessor never be desecrated in the netherworld"	
	17 "May this tomb never be desecrated"	
No Annotation Given	18 "I am Djabyt in the house of Benben in Heliopolis, so exalted and glorious. [I am] copulating bull without equal. [I am] that mighty god in the house of Benben of Heliopolis... that might god..."	
	19 "You shall be as that god, the Busirian"	
	20	
	21	
	22 Writing: "The name of this mighty god"	
	23 Figures 22,23; Baboons are adoring souls of that realm	

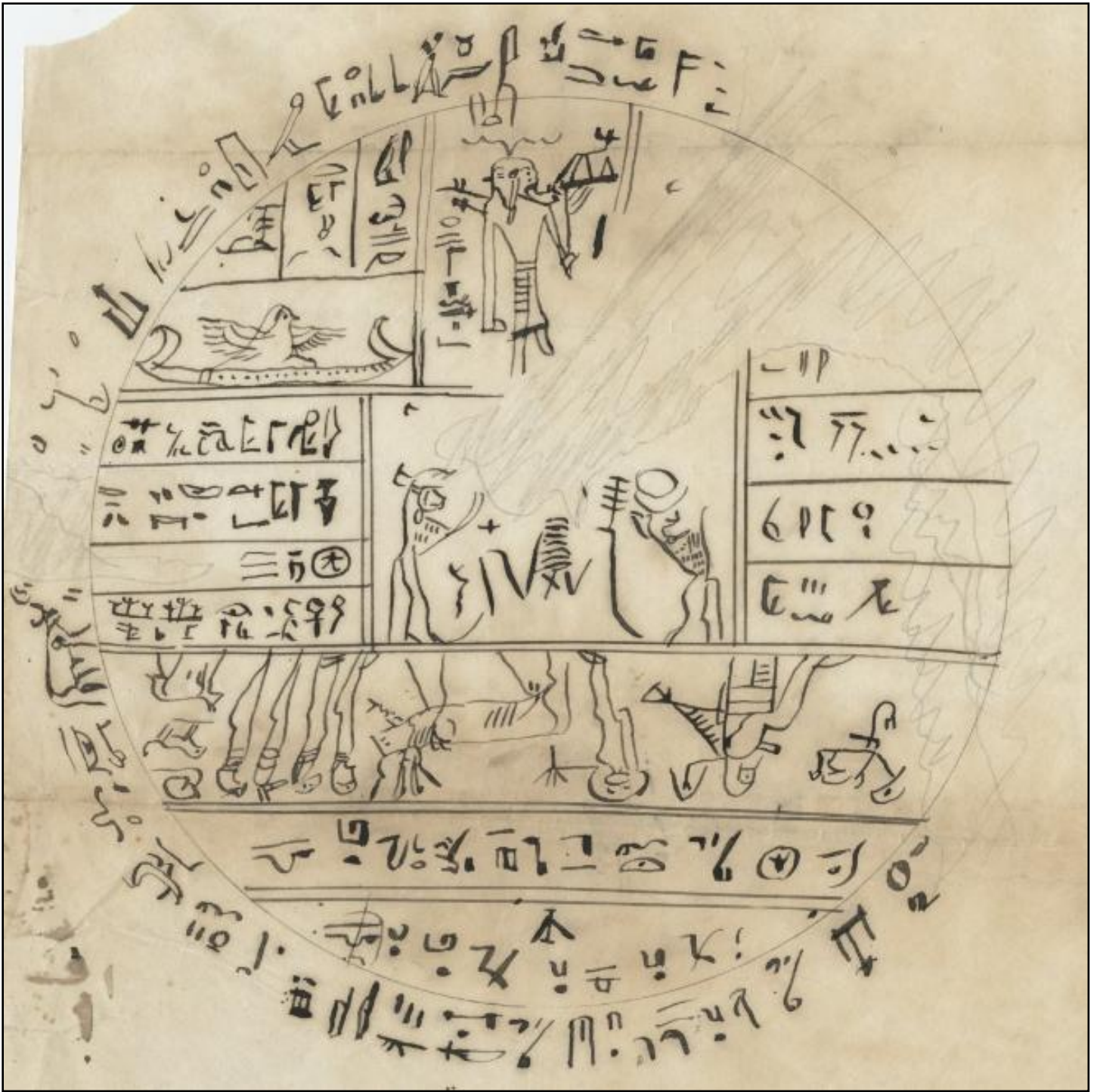
  

JOSEPH SMITH vs EGYPTOLOGISTS	JOSEPH SMITH vs EGYPTOLOGISTS
4 quarters of earth vs "Sons of Horus"	God on his throne vs Min, phallic God

Joseph Smith's Interpretation available @ [lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr/fac-2](https://lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr/fac-2)  
 Modern Egyptological Interpretation compiled @ [bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA\\_7.html](https://bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA_7.html)  
 LDS apologist explanation @ [en.fairmormon.org/Book\\_of\\_Abraham/Joseph\\_Smith\\_Papyri](https://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Abraham/Joseph_Smith_Papyri)

**MormonInfographics.com**

Figure 10: Original Drawing of Facsimile 2



As with Facsimile 1, Smith's restoration of Facsimile 2 was incorrect. **Figure 11**<sup>45</sup> shows Smith's restoration compared to a correct restoration.<sup>46</sup> Smith's restoration involved taking portions of other papyri and filling in the gaps. Smith filled in a gap by taking the picture outlined in black from fragment 4 of the Book of the Dead belonging to lady Tshenmin. (**Fig. 4**).<sup>47</sup> Also, **Figure 12**<sup>48</sup> shows how Smith filled in gaps using characters from the Small Senses (No. 11 in **Figure 3**)<sup>49</sup> portion of the Breathing Permit.

The characters outlined in blue he copied twice. The characters outlined in green followed next. Both the characters outlined in blue and those outlined in green were copied into Facsimile 2 upside down (Egyptian characters are read from right to left). The characters in red, purple, and yellow were also copied into Facsimile 2 upside down. Finally, all of the aforementioned characters copied from the Small Senses portion of the Breathing Permit are hieratic characters while Facsimile 2 is written in hieroglyphics. Therefore, Smith copied in characters of the wrong form of Egyptian.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>; The blank right outer edge of Facsimile 2 would have contained the remainder of the spell.

<sup>47</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>; <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>49</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>; [http://www.bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA\\_4.html](http://www.bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA_4.html)

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N02\\_94.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N02_94.pdf);  
<https://www.sunstonemagazine.com/pdf/017-8-33-48.pdf>



**Figure 12: Smith Used Portions of Other Papyri to Restore Facsimile 2**





## D. Facsimile 3: Translated Incorrectly

Facsimile 3 is a copy of the vignette that made up the last section of the Breathing Permit of Hor.<sup>51</sup> This fragment was not part of the rediscovered papyri and remains missing. As discussed earlier, it was not created until at least 1,000-1,900 years after Abraham's lifetime.

Smith provided a translation of Facsimile 3 which can be compared to Egyptologists' translation of the facsimile. (Fig. 13).<sup>52</sup> As can be seen in Figure 13<sup>53</sup>, Smith's translation is completely wrong. Particularly egregious mistranslations include numbers 2 and 4 which Smith declares are males but are actually females. Also, number 5, which Smith declares to be a waiter, is actually the deceased, Hor. Finally, number 6 is also particularly absurd – Smith identifies the figure as a slave but it is actually a god.

**Figure 13: Translation of Facsimile 3**

Figure #1	
Interpreter	Joseph Abraham
Egyptologist	Osiris

Figure #2	
Interpreter	Joseph Male - Pharaoh
Egyptologist	Female - Isis

Figure #3	
Interpreter	Joseph Abraham in Egypt
Egyptologist	Libation Table

Figure #4	
Interpreter	Joseph Male - Prince
Egyptologist	Female - Maat

Figure #5	
Interpreter	Joseph Shulem, a waiter
Egyptologist	Hôr, the deceased

Figure #6	
Interpreter	Joseph Olimlah, a slave
Egyptologist	Anubis, a god

Joseph offered no translation of Lower Vignette

"O gods of the necropolis, gods of the caverns, gods of the south, north, west, and east, grant salvation to the Osiris Hôr, the justified, born by Taikhibit."

Egyptologist Translation of Lower

Joseph Smith's Interpretation	Modern Egyptological Interpretation
Abraham sitting upon Pharaoh's throne, by the politeness of the king, with a crown upon his head, representing the Priesthood, as emblematical of the grand Presidency in Heaven; with the scepter of justice and judgment in his hand.	1 This is Osiris Writing above figure: " <b>Recitation by Osiris, Foremost of the Westerners</b> " The "atef" crown also identifies him as Osiris
King Pharaoh, whose name is given in the characters above his head.	2 This figure is female not male. Writing above figure: " <b>Isis the great, the god's mother</b> "
Signifies Abraham in Egypt as given also in Figure 10 of Facsimile No. 1.	3 This is a libation table (wine, oils, etc.)
Prince of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, as written above the hand.	4 This figure is female not male. Writing above figure: " <b>Maat, mistress of the gods.</b> "
Shulem, one of the king's principal waiters, as represented by the characters above his hand.	5 This is the deceased individual wearing the traditional cone of perfumed grease and lotus flower on his head. Writing above figure: " <b>The Osiris Hôr, justified forever</b> "
Olimlah, a slave belonging to the prince.	6 Not a slave, this is Anubis, guide of the dead, who is there to Support the deceased. Writing above figure: " <b>Recitation by Anubis, who makes protection(?), foremost of the embalming booth,...</b> "

Joseph Smith's Interpretation available @ [lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr/fac-3](http://lds.org/scriptures/pgp/abr/fac-3)  
 Modern Egyptological Interpretation compiled @ [bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA\\_6.html](http://bookofabraham.com/boamathie/BOA_6.html)  
 LDS apologist explanation @ [en.fairmormon.org/Book\\_of\\_Abraham/Joseph\\_Smith\\_Papyri](http://en.fairmormon.org/Book_of_Abraham/Joseph_Smith_Papyri)

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<sup>51</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N03\\_111.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N03_111.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/book-of-abraham-facsimile-3-examined.html>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.mormoninfographics.com/2012/08/book-of-abraham-facsimile-3-examined.html>

#### IV. THE CHURCH PROPOSES NEW THEORIES TO DEFEND THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

Since the publication of Deveria's translation of the facsimiles in 1861, the church has been aware of the problems surrounding the translation of the Book of Abraham. These problems multiplied when the papyri were rediscovered in 1966 because the church now had in its possession some of the papyri Smith used and 1) the papyri were dated to at least 1,000-1,900 years after the lifetime of Abraham, and 2) none of the papyri contained any resemblance to the translation Smith provided. (See section II above).

Eventually, the church chose to present additional theories regarding Smith's translation in an attempt to explain away these problems. It did so by publishing a response to a question in the "I Have a Question" portion of the July 1988 Ensign.<sup>54</sup> The question and response were preceded by a disclaimer: "Questions of general gospel interest answered for guidance, not as official statements of Church policy." Thus, it appears the church gave itself some room to adopt, revise, or reject the response in the future.

The question posed was, "Why doesn't the translation of the Egyptian papyri found in 1967 match the text of the Book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price?" The response was written by Michael Rhodes, an LDS Egyptologist. Rhodes reiterates the story of the rediscovery of the papyri and states that the papyri were "clearly part of Joseph Smith's original collection." Rhodes goes on to state that Facsimile 1 was indeed taken from the Breathing Permit but that the Breathing Permit could not possibly be the source of the Book of Abraham because 1) the Breathing permit is dated far too late, and 2) an accurate translation of the Breathing Permit does not reflect what Smith produced:

"Abraham refers to a picture in the text of the book of Abraham (Abr. 1:12), and this picture is presumed to be the one we call facsimile one; therefore, some people have concluded that this Book of Breathings must be the text Joseph Smith used in his translation of the book of Abraham. However, there are some serious problems associated with this assumption. First of all, from paleographic and historical considerations, the Book of Breathings papyrus can reliably be dated to around A.D. 60—much too late for Abraham to have written it. Of course, it could be a copy—or a copy of a copy—of the original written by Abraham. However, a second problem arises when one compares the text of the book of Abraham with a translation of the Book of Breathings; they clearly are not the same. Enemies of the Church have noted this and, without considering any other facts, have assumed that this proves the Prophet's translation to be a hoax."

Rhodes goes on to explain that not only does the Breathing Permit not reflect Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham, *none* of the rediscovered papyri do: "we don't have all the papyri Joseph Smith had—and what we do have is obviously not the text of the book of Abraham."

Rhodes presents "two possible explanations why the text of the recently discovered papyri does not match the text in the Pearl of Great Price." The first possible explanation is often referred to as the "Missing Papyrus Theory." Rhodes explains that the text of the Book of Abraham, "may have been taken from a different portion of the papyrus rolls in Joseph Smith's possession." Rhodes states, "It is not unreasonable to suppose that Abraham's ancient record could have been copied many times through the generations and treasured for its antiquity centuries later. Perhaps it was just such a multigeneration copy that finally ended up with the mummies and documents that came into Michael Chandler's possession...."

The second possible explanation Rhodes proposes is often referred to as the "Catalyst Theory:"

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1988/07/i-have-a-question>

“[Joseph] through revelation—could have obtained the translation—or, as Joseph Smith used the word, he could have received the meaning, or subject-matter content of the original text, as he did in his translation of the Bible. This explanation would mean that Joseph Smith received the text of our present book of Abraham the same way he received the translation of the parchment of John the Revelator—he did not even need the actual text in front of him.”

The Catalyst Theory separates the Book of Abraham from the papyri by suggesting that Smith didn’t need the papyri because he received the text through revelation and that the papyri could have simply acted as a catalyst in prompting him to receive the revelation.

Therefore, Rhodes’ article in the Ensign presents two possible explanations for why the translation of Smith’s papyri does not match Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham: 1) The Missing Papyrus Theory, and 2) The Catalyst Theory. These two theories are also the most popular theories relied on by apologists in their attempt to defend the Book of Abraham.

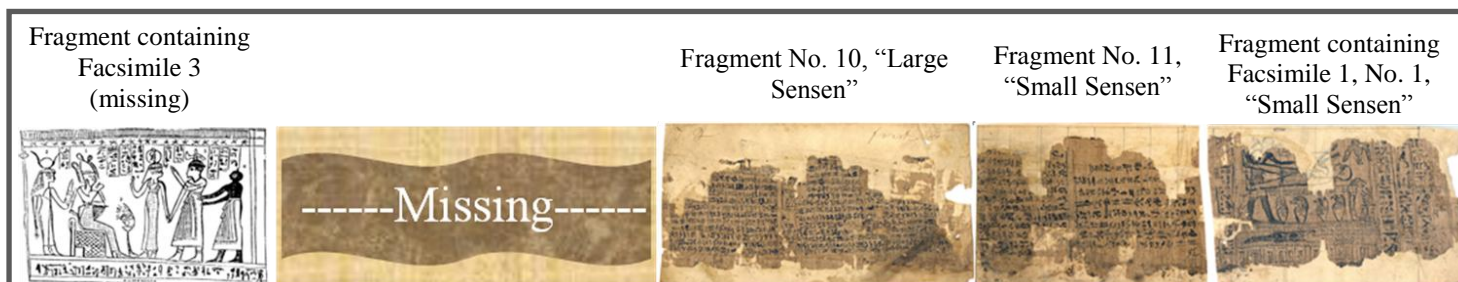
## V. THE MISSING PAPYRUS THEORY FAILS

The Missing Papyrus Theory fails because it is indisputable that the source of the Book of Abraham was the Small Sensen fragment of the Breathing Permit of Hor scroll. This is evidenced by textual references in the Book of Abraham to Facsimile 1, the length of the Breathing Permit scroll, the manuscripts of the Book of Abraham, and the Egyptian Alphabets.

### A. The Source of the Book of Abraham Must Be Some Part of the Breathing Permit of Hor

The Breathing Permit of Hor scroll begins on the far right with the number 1 fragment from which Facsimile 1 was taken (it is read from right to left), which is followed by the number 11 fragment (also known as the “Small Sensen” fragment), which is followed by the number 10 fragment (also known as the “Large Sensen” fragment), which is followed by a missing section of the scroll, and finally the scroll ends with the fragment from which Facsimile 3 was taken (**Fig. 14**)<sup>55, 56</sup>.

**Figure 14: Breathing Permit of Hor Scroll**



<sup>55</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>56</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V33N04\\_107.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N04_107.pdf);  
[https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N03\\_111.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N03_111.pdf)

Scholars have shown that it is indisputable that the Large Sensen fragment, Small Sensen fragment, and Facsimile 1 fragment were all part of the Breathing Permit of Hor scroll.<sup>57</sup> This is established by various facts, not the least of which is the fact that the decedent's name, "Hor," appears on all three of the fragments.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, even the Church's 1988 Ensign article agrees that the Small Sensen fragment and the Facsimile 1 fragment are both part of the Breathing Permit of Hor scroll.<sup>59</sup>

It is also clear that the Facsimile 1 fragment was connected to and immediately followed by the Small Sensen fragment. This is evidenced by the fact that the two fragments were originally glued to heavy paper while they were still one piece. Then, at some point, the two fragments were cut apart. A comparison of the edges show a perfect match, indicating that the two fragments were originally one piece before being cut apart. (Figs. 15<sup>60</sup>, 16<sup>61</sup>).

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<sup>57</sup> For example, see [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V33N04\\_107.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V33N04_107.pdf), and [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N03\\_111.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N03_111.pdf)

<sup>58</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N03\\_111.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N03_111.pdf); <http://www.utlm.org/other/robertritnerpapyriarticle.pdf>

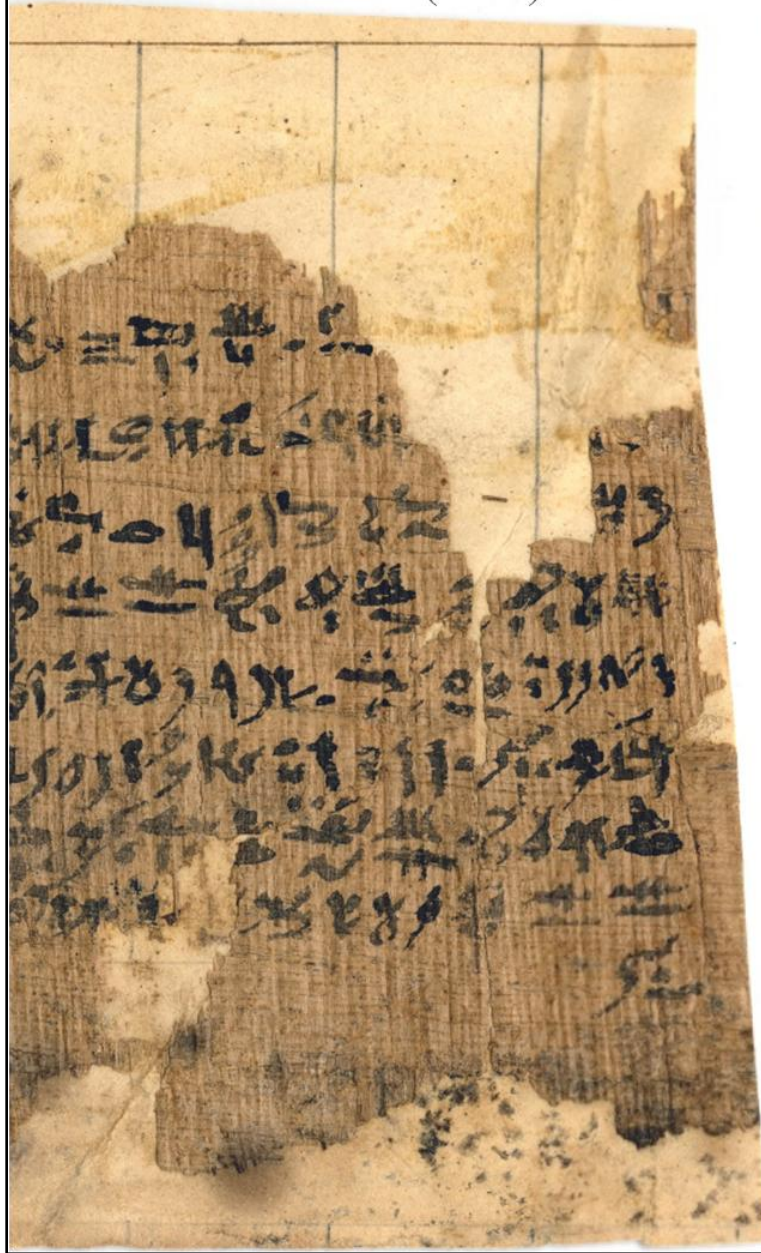
<sup>59</sup> <http://www.lds.org/ensign/1988/07/i-have-a-question>

<sup>60</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>61</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

**Figure 15: Small Sensen and Facsimile 1 Fragment Edges Compared (front)**

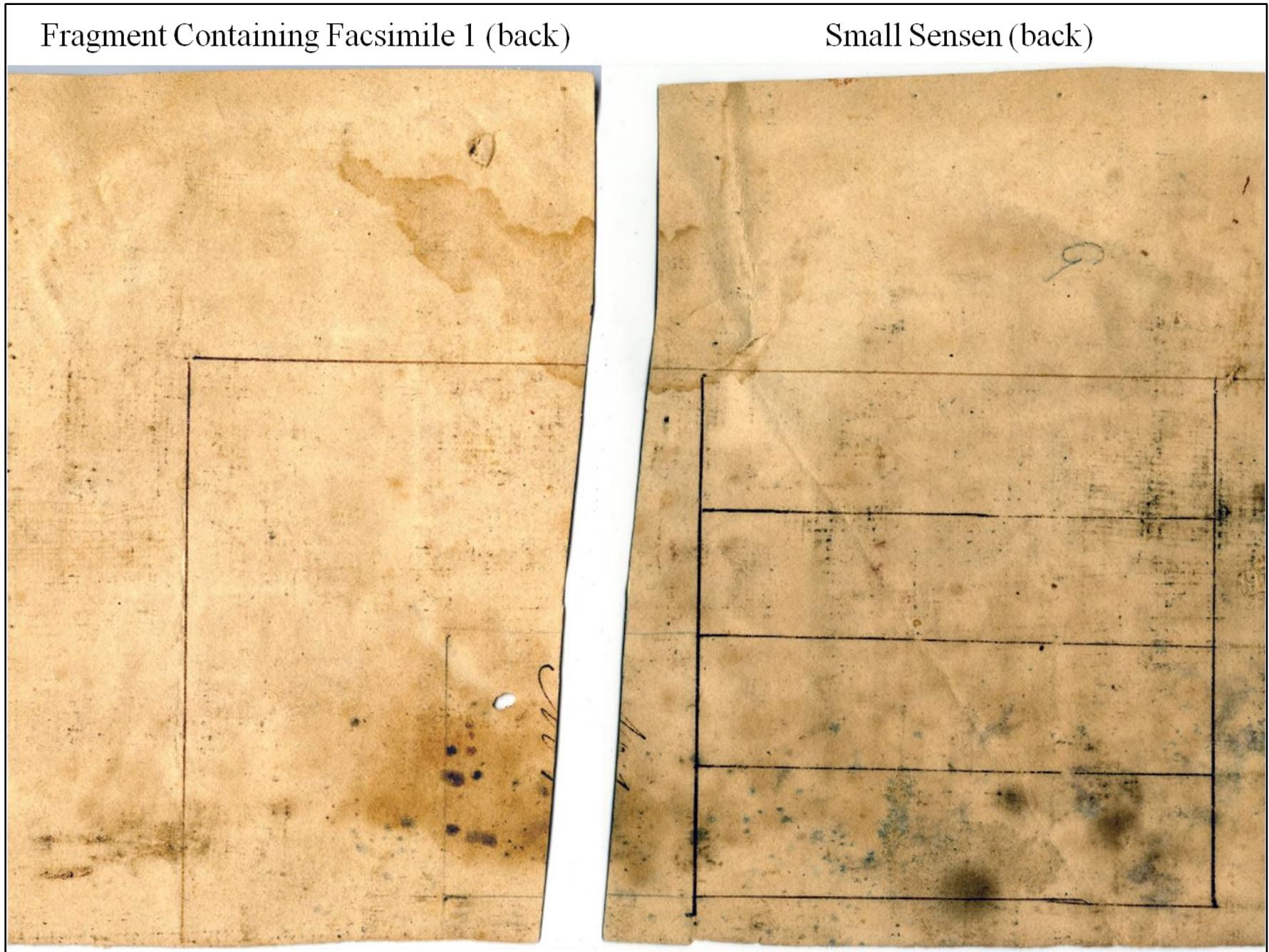
Small Sensen (front)



Fragment Containing Facsimile 1 (front)



**Figure 16: Small Sensen and Facsimile 1 Fragment Edges Compared (back)**



## **B. Textual Evidence in the Book of Abraham Establishes that its Source is the Breathing Permit of Hor**

Two verses in the Book of Abraham refer to Facsimile 1 and state that Facsimile 1 appears at beginning of the source of the Book of Abraham. Abraham 1:12-14 states,

“12 And it came to pass that the priests laid violence upon me, that they might slay me also, as they did those virgins upon this altar; and that you may have a knowledge of this altar, **I will refer you to the representation at the commencement of this record.**

13 It was made after the form of a bedstead, such as was had among the Chaldeans, and it stood before the gods of Elkenah, Libnah, Mahmackrah, Korash, and also a god like unto that of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

14 That you may have an understanding of these gods, **I have given you the fashion of them in the figures at the beginning,** which manner of figures is called by the Chaldeans Rahleenos, which signifies hieroglyphics.” (emphasis added)

Therefore, the Book of Abraham text itself indicates that its source is the same record that commences with Facsimile 1, which is the Breathing Permit of Hor. Furthermore, Smith’s first publication of the Book of Abraham in the March 1, 1842 edition of the Times and Seasons began with Facsimile 1, followed by the text of the Book of Abraham, further indicating that Smith’s source for the Book of Abraham was the Breathing Permit of Hor. (Fig. 17).<sup>62</sup>

The question is, then, which part of the Breathing Permit contained the Book of Abraham? The Small Sensen, Large Sensen, Missing Portion, Facsimile 3, or a combination of these parts?

## **C. The Source of the Book of Abraham Cannot be the Missing Portion of the Breathing Permit of Hor**

In 1968, shortly after the publication of the rediscovery of the papyri, an Egyptologist from the University of Chicago, Klaus Baer, studied the fragments and concluded that the Breathing Permit of Hor would be approximately 150-155 cm total in length. He estimated the missing portion to be about 59 cm in length, and if Facsimile 3 was excluded (approximately 17 cm) then the unaccounted for missing portion would be approximately 42 cm in length.<sup>63</sup>

In 2010, the length of the Breathing Permit scroll was revisited in an article published by Andrew W. Cook and Christopher C. Smith.<sup>64</sup> Cook and Smith took a much more mathematical approach by examining where the repeated and matching tears were in the scroll which had been caused by the original removal of the scroll from its embalming salve. This could then be input into a mathematic formula to determine the length of scroll. Cook and Smith found that the length of the missing portion of the Breathing Permit scroll was 56 cm. Thus, Baer’s 59 cm approximation was a mere 3 cm off. By subtracting approximately 17 cm for Facsimile 3, the remaining missing portion is approximately 39 cm in length.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9200>

<sup>63</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V03N03\\_111.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V03N03_111.pdf); <https://dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/The-Original-Length-of-the-Scroll-of-Hor.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> <https://dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/The-Original-Length-of-the-Scroll-of-Hor.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> In response to Cook and Smith’s findings, LDS Egyptologist John Gee attempted to refute their conclusions in an article he published entitled “Formulas and Faith” in 2012, <http://maxwellinstitute.byu.edu/publications/jbms/21/1/S00005-500d8bc3212a05-Formulas%20and%20Faith.pdf>. Gee claimed Cook and Smith used an incorrect mathematical formula and presented an alternative formula which output a longer scroll length. Cook subsequently responded to Gee in an article entitled “Formulas and Facts,” pointing

The question is, then, whether the source of the Book of Abraham could have fit on the 39 cm missing portion of the Breathing Permit. This can be determined by calculating the space that would be required for the Book of Abraham to appear in hieratic characters on the Small Sensen. This can be ascertained in the following way: The first half of the Small Sensen is about 9 cm wide and translates into about 97 English words.<sup>66</sup> (**Fig. 18**).<sup>67</sup> Therefore, dividing 97 English words by 9 cm yields 10.78 English words per cm. There are 5,506 English words in the Book of Abraham. If 5,506 English words are divided by 10.78 English words per cm the result is approximately 511 cm of papyrus required to fit the Book of Abraham. This is clearly much longer than the 39 cm that makes up the unaccounted for portion of the missing papyrus.

Therefore, the Book of Abraham could not possibly fit in the missing portion of the Breathing Permit. In fact, the missing portion would need to be more than 13 times longer than 39 cm in order for the Book of Abraham to fit.

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out Gee's faulty use of the alternative formula and demonstrating how proper use yielded the exact same result Cook and Smith found, [http://66.147.244.190/~dialogu5/wp-content/uploads/premium/Dialogue\\_V45N03\\_120.pdf](http://66.147.244.190/~dialogu5/wp-content/uploads/premium/Dialogue_V45N03_120.pdf). Gee has not responded.

<sup>66</sup> <https://dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/The-Original-Length-of-the-Scroll-of-Hor.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>



**Figure 17: First Publication of the Book of Abraham (note that it begins with Facsimile 1 and then proceeds with the text)**

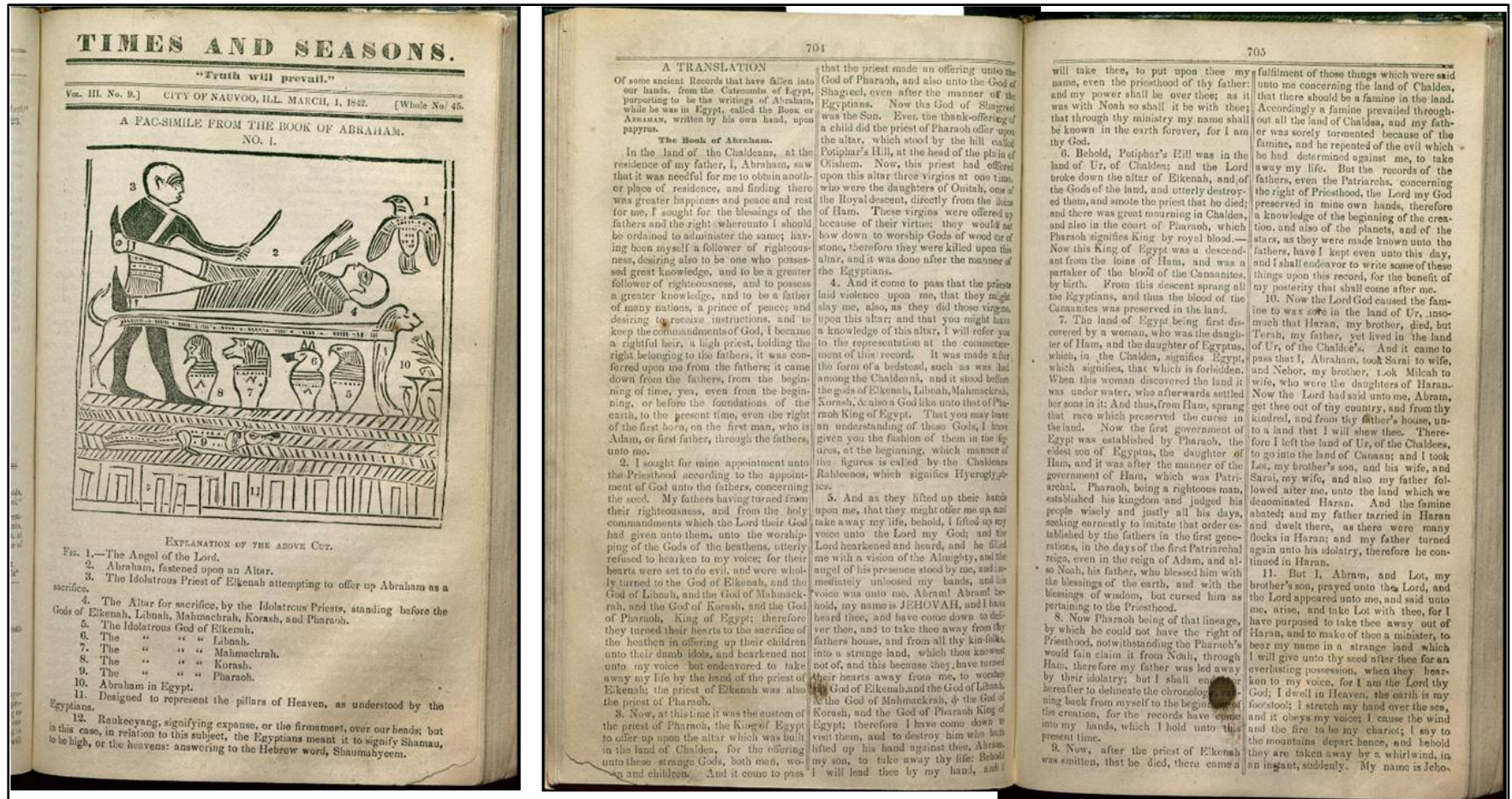
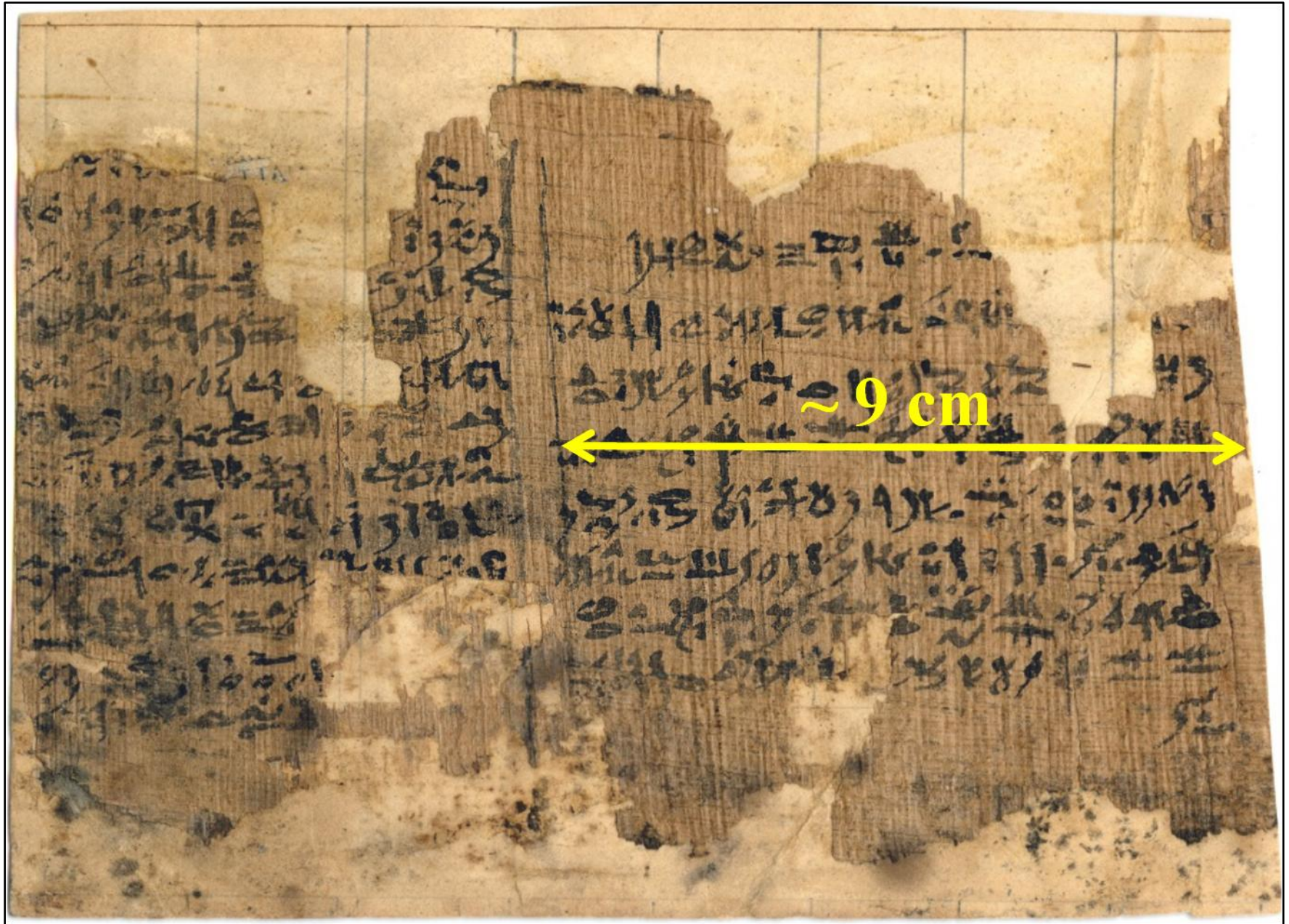


Figure 18: Nine Inch Portion of the Small Senses Translates Into 97 English Words



**D. Manuscripts of The Book of Abraham Establish that the Source of the Book of Abraham is the Small Sensen Portion of the Breathing Permit**

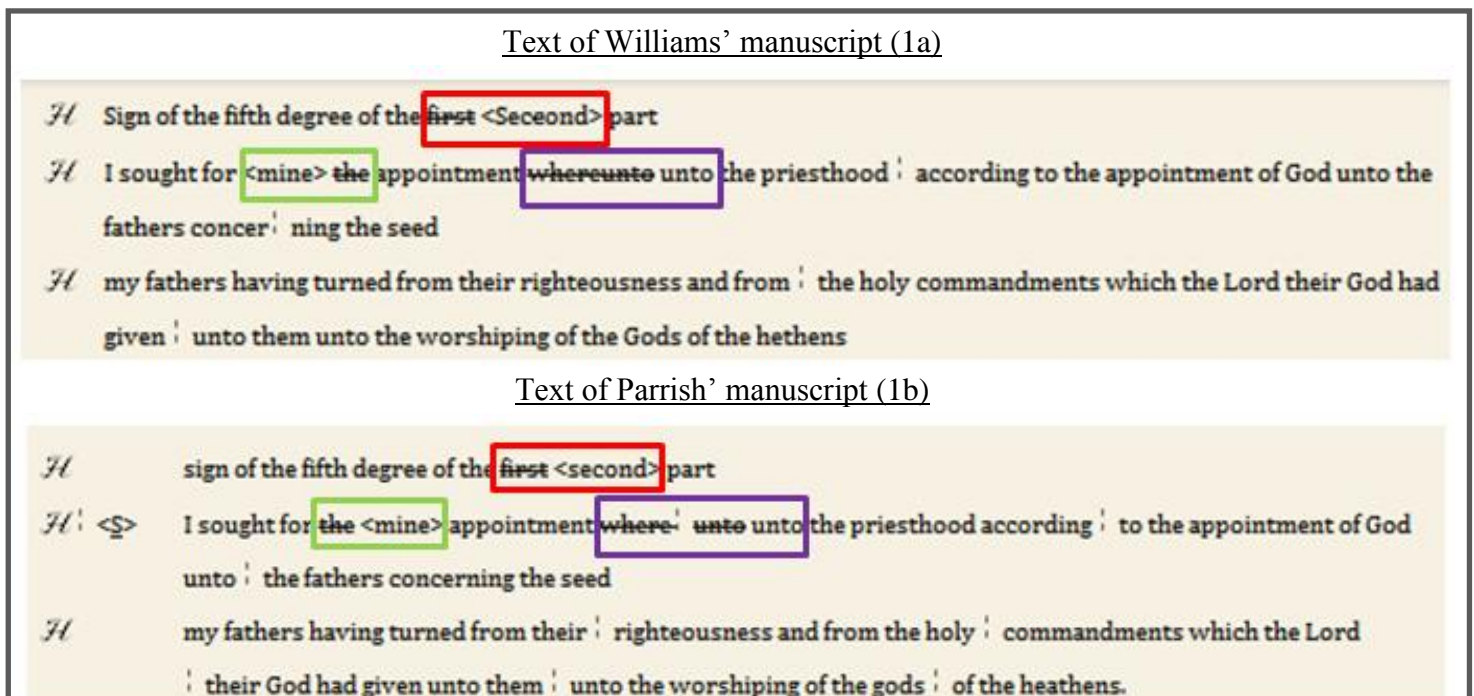
A total of five manuscripts of the Book of Abraham exist. (Fig. 2).<sup>68</sup>

- 1a – Written by Fredrick G. Williams (containing verses 1:4-2:6)
- 1b – Written by Warren Parrish (containing verses 1:4-2:2)
- 2 – Written by William W Phelps and Warren Parrish (containing verses 1:1-2:18)
- 3a – Written by Willard Richards (containing verses 1:1-2:18)
- 3b – Written by Willard Richards (containing verses 3:18-26)

Three of the manuscripts – 1a, 1b, and 2, date back to 1835 while 3a and 3b were created later. 1a and 1b appear to be the first, or among the first, manuscripts as they appear to be written at the same time while Smith dictated the Book of Abraham. This is evidenced by the fact that the vast majority of the corrections in the two manuscripts are identical (like the crossing out of words and phrases and corrections of them). (Fig. 19).<sup>69</sup> Also, both manuscripts start at chapter 1 verse 4. Finally, both begin with the unique beginning of “sign of the fifth degree of the second part.”

Manuscript 2 appears to have been written after 1a and 1b because it incorporates the changes made in 1a and 1b.

**Figure 19: Example of Identical Corrections in Manuscripts 1a and 1b**



<sup>68</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>69</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

1. The Characters in the Margins of the Manuscripts Match the Characters in the Small Sensen

In all three of the 1835 manuscripts, there are hieratic characters written in the margins. (**Fig. 20**).<sup>70</sup> The hieratic characters correspond to the same verses in all three of the manuscripts. These hieratic characters come from the Small Sensen portion of the Breathing Permit and appear on the manuscripts in the same order they appear on the Small Sensen. Therefore, the manuscripts indicate that the source of the Book of Abraham is the characters on the Small Sensen portion of the Breathing Permit of Hor.

**Figure 21**<sup>71</sup> shows the Small Sensen. **Figure 22**<sup>72</sup> shows how the characters from the margins of Manuscript 2 match up with the characters on the Small Sensen. The characters in the margins of all three of the manuscripts are associated with the same verses and these verses are also noted in **Figure 22**<sup>73</sup>.

The papyrus is read from right to left. The first three lines of the Small Sensen and first character group on the fourth line make up Abraham 1:1-2:18 in the manuscripts. The characters at the start of the first line are lost in the damaged section but make up Abraham 1:1-9.<sup>74</sup> The first line of the still present portion of the Small Sensen make up Abraham 1:7-19. The second line starts again with a torn section but the characters that would be there make up Abraham 1:20-28. The second line of the characters that still exist cover Abraham 1:29 to 2:5. The characters in line 3 constitute Abraham 2:6-16. Finally, the first character group on line four is translated as Abraham 2:17-18. None of the 1835 manuscripts go beyond Abraham 2:18.

Smith's translation of the hieratic characters on the Small Sensen, however, is completely wrong.

2. The Correct Translation of the Small Sensen Is Completely Different From the Book of Abraham

As discussed earlier, nothing in the entire rediscovered papyri, known missing papyri, EAs, etc., has any connection to the Book of Abraham. For illustrative purposes, **Figure 23**<sup>75</sup> shows a correct translation of the first four lines of the Small Sensen – the same four lines Smith translated into Abraham 1:1-2:18.<sup>76</sup> While his translations in the manuscripts associated entire paragraphs with a character group on the Small Sensen, in reality a translation of hieratic characters into English words is not nearly as lengthy.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>71</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>72</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>73</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>74</sup> The characters in the margins of the manuscripts that correspond with this torn out section are not hieratic characters at all. These characters were simply created by Smith or his scribes. Therefore, when Smith did the translation the papyrus must have already been torn so Smith or his scribes created the characters and attributed them to the torn out section. See Ritner, R., *The Joseph Smith Egyptian Papyri: A Complete Edition*, pp. 27-28.

<sup>75</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>; <http://www.utlm.org/other/robertritnerpapyriarticle.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.utlm.org/other/robertritnerpapyriarticle.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> In fact, while the manuscripts only provide a translation of the Small Sensen characters up to Abraham 2:18, by applying the same length of translation per character Joseph did from 1:1-2:18 to the rest of the Book of Abraham and Small Sensen, it's clear that the entire Book of Abraham could easily fit on the Small Sensen alone: There are a total of 136 verses in the Book of Abraham and Abraham 1:1-2:18 covers 49 of those verses, or 36% of the Book of Abraham. Looking at the Small Sensen, one can see that the slightly more than three lines of hieratic characters Joseph used to produce 1:1-2:18 is roughly only 25% of the characters on the Small Sensen. Therefore, there seems to be more than adequate room to fit the entire Book of Abraham on the Small Sensen alone if the density of Joseph's hieratic character – English translation remained constant through the end of the translation.

**Figure 20: Hieratic Characters Written in the Margins of the Manuscripts**

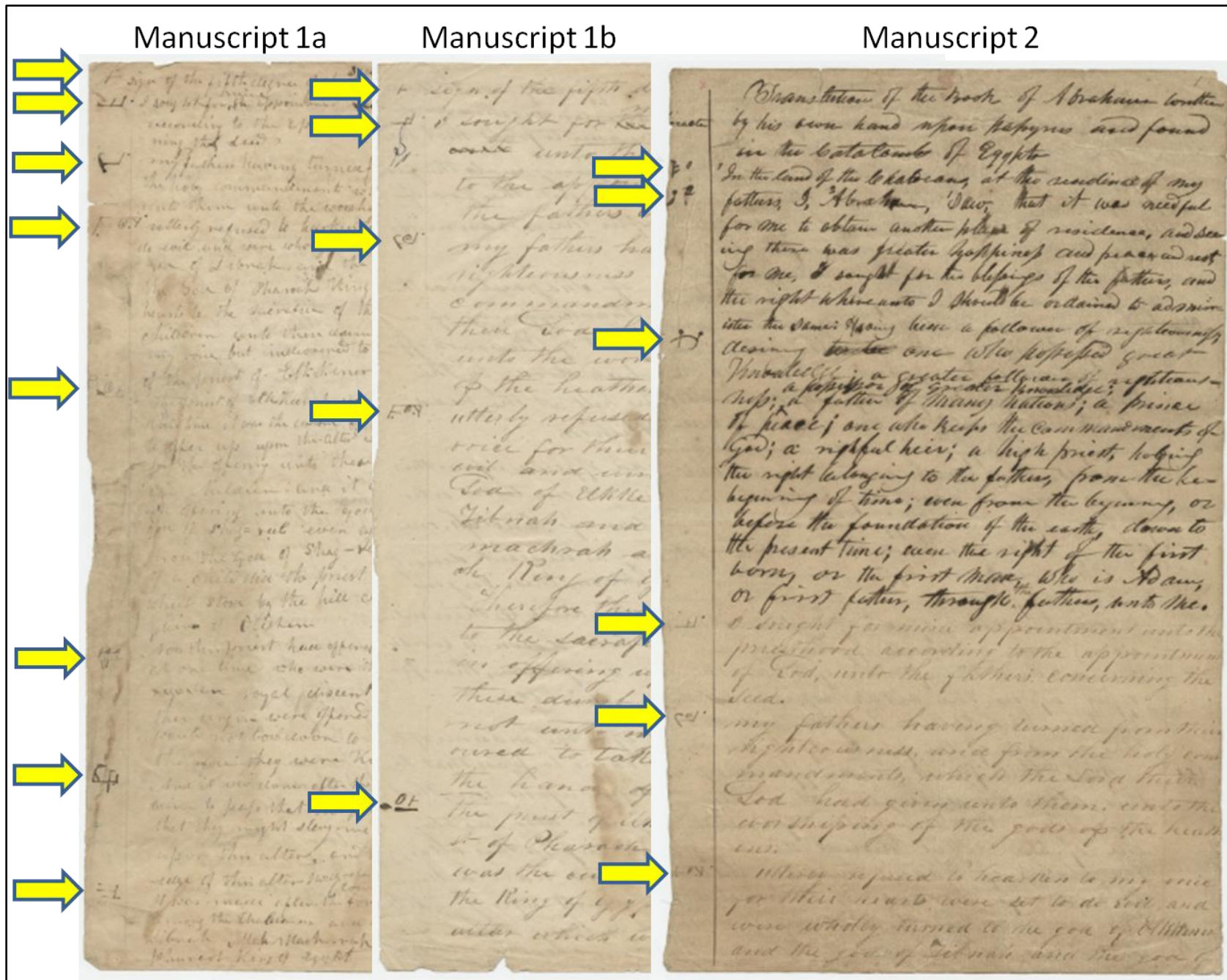
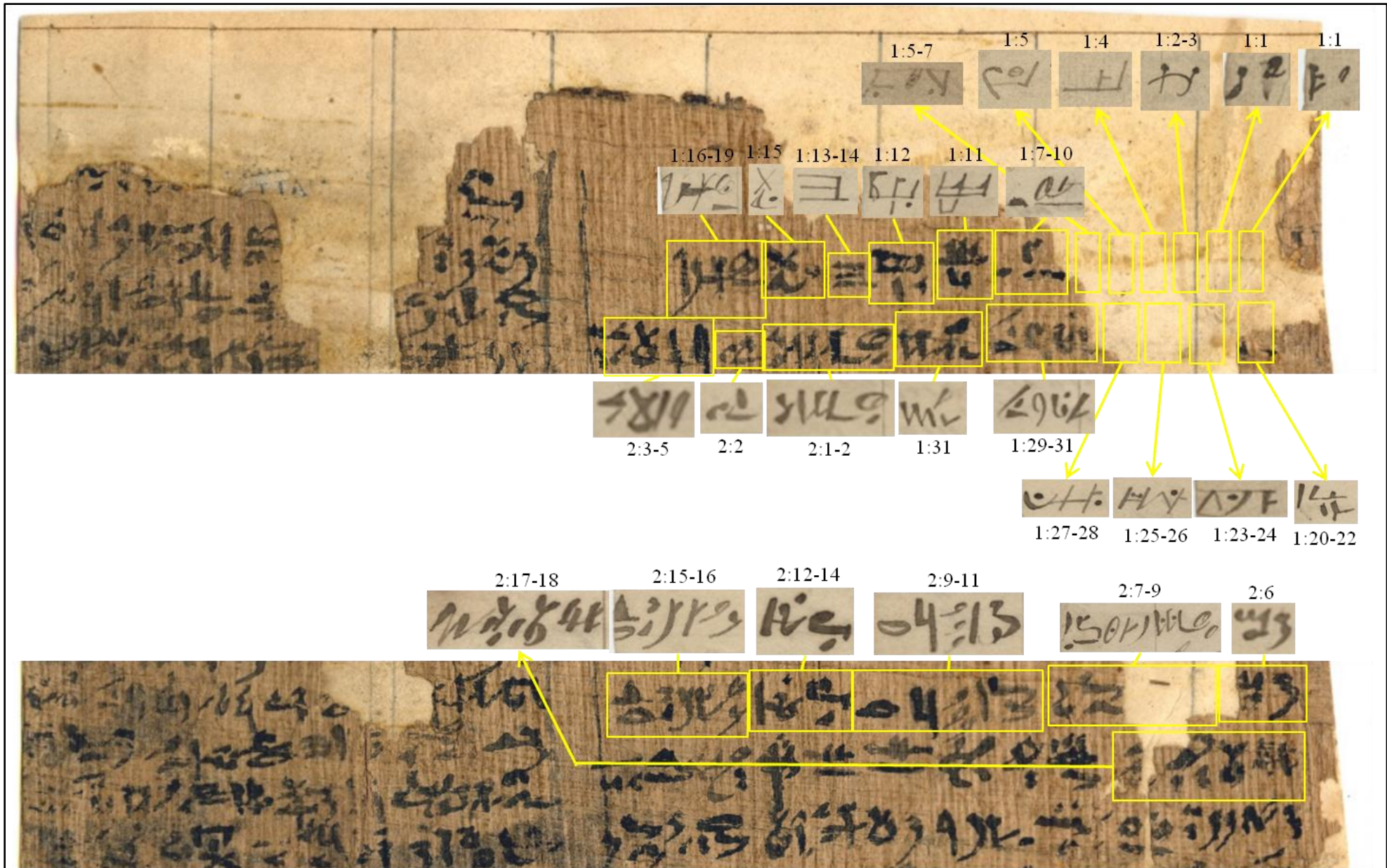


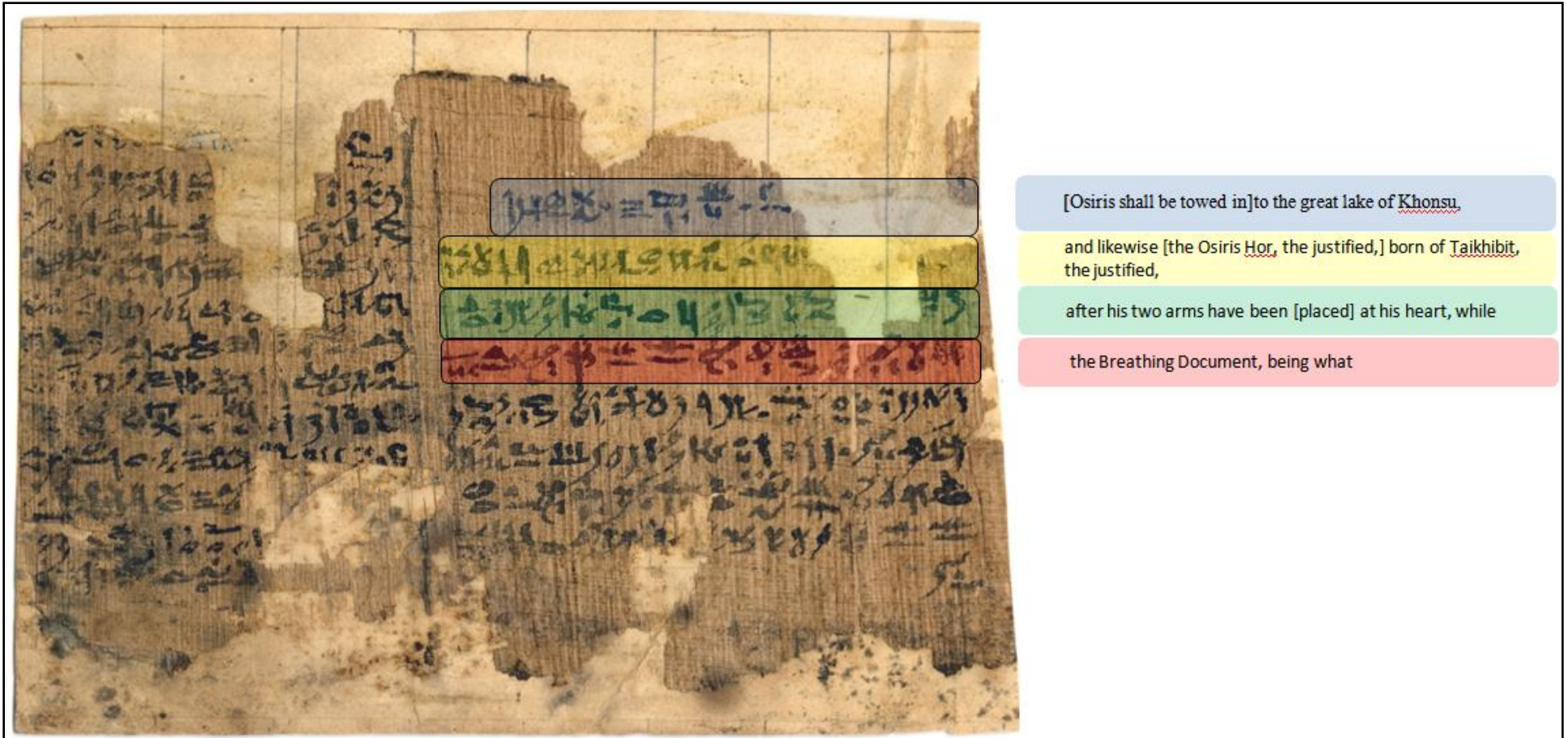
Figure 21: Small Senses Portion of the Breathing Permit of Hor



**Figure 22: Characters from the Manuscripts and Corresponding Verses Matched with Characters on the Small Sensen**



**Figure 23: Actual Translation of the Small Senses Characters Smith Translated into Abraham 1:1-2:18**





### 3. The Characters in the Margins of the Manuscripts Were Not Added Later as Some Apologists Contend

Apologists understanding the gravity of the connection between the Book of Abraham manuscripts and the Small Sensen have attempted to distance the two. They have at times argued that perhaps the Small Sensen characters in the manuscript margins were added to the manuscripts by a different author at a later date and thus were not added under the direction of Smith. This argument is disproved by the fact that both the tint of the writing in the manuscripts and the neatness of the writing in the manuscripts indicate that it was the original authors who recorded the Small Sensen characters in the margins.

**Figure 24**<sup>78</sup> compares a close up of one of the characters in the margins of Manuscript 1a and 1b and part of the verses written beside them. It is clear that Williams, the author of Manuscript 1a, is a neater writer than Parrish, author of Manuscript 1b. This is evident in both the neatness of the writing and in the neatness of the formation of the hieratic characters. Thus, it is clear that Williams wrote the Small Sensen characters in the margins of Manuscript 1a and Parrish wrote the Small Sensen characters in the margins of 1b. The characters were not written in later by a different author.

**Figure 25**<sup>79</sup> is a portion of Manuscript 2 which was written by two authors – Phelps and Parrish. This portion of Manuscript 2 shows a change in the author from Phelps to Parrish.<sup>80</sup> The tint of the writing changes with the author. Phelps writes darker than Parrish and this is reflected in both the writing of the verses and in the drawing of the Small Sensen characters. Therefore, this further demonstrates that it was the original authors of the manuscripts under the direction of Smith who wrote the Small Sensen characters in the margins of the manuscripts, not some later author.

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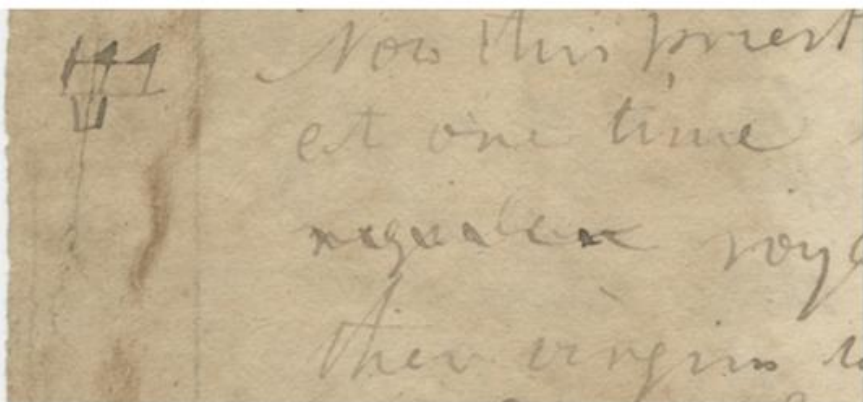
<sup>78</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>79</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>80</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

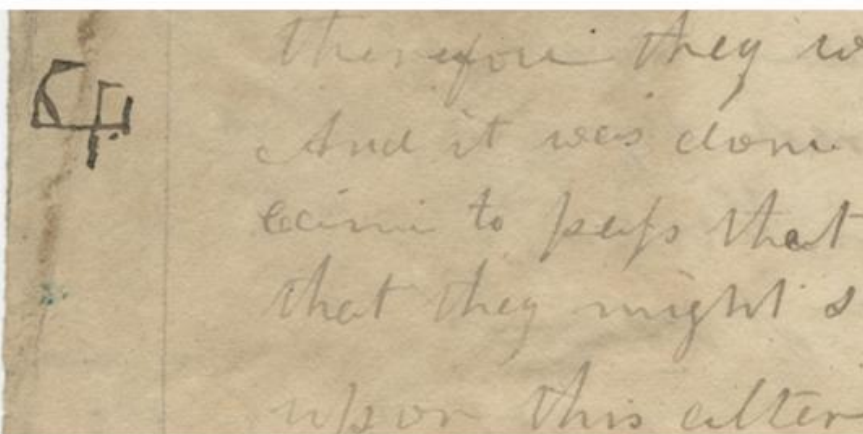
**Figure 24: Comparison of the Neatness of the Manuscript Authors' Writing of the Verses and Hieratic Characters**

Manuscript 1a (Williams)



Now this priest  
at one time  
regaled the  
their virgin

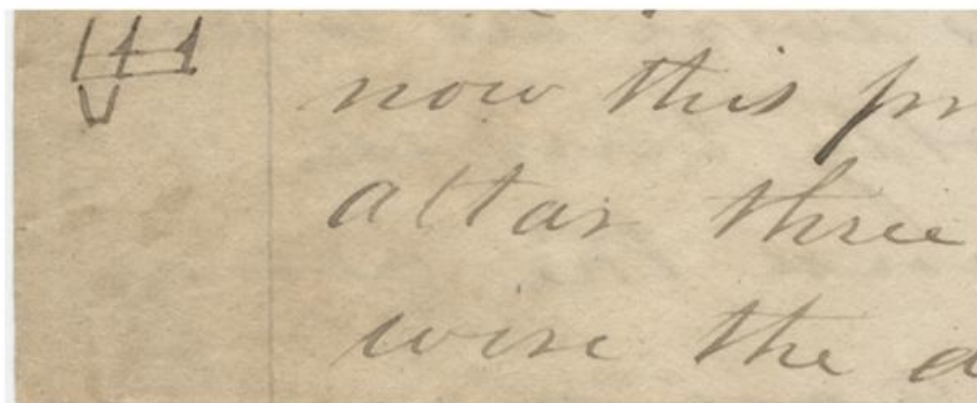
The top section of Manuscript 1a shows a column of hieratic characters on the left and three lines of cursive text on the right. The text is written in a somewhat slanted, cursive hand.



therefore they  
and it was done  
begin to pass that  
that they might  
upon this letter

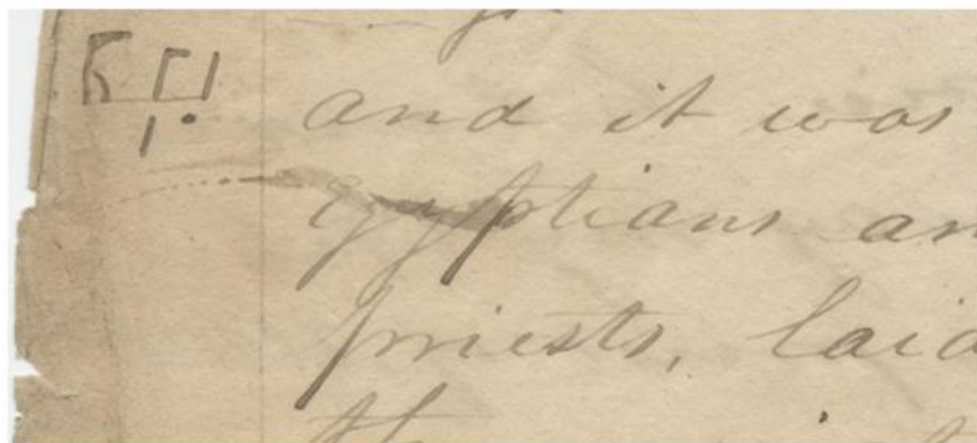
The bottom section of Manuscript 1a shows a column of hieratic characters on the left and four lines of cursive text on the right. The text continues the narrative from the top section.

Manuscript 1b (Parrish)



now this pr  
altar three  
wise the d

The top section of Manuscript 1b shows a column of hieratic characters on the left and three lines of cursive text on the right. The text is written in a more upright and regular cursive hand compared to Manuscript 1a.



and it was  
Egyptians an  
priests, laid  
At

The bottom section of Manuscript 1b shows a column of hieratic characters on the left and four lines of cursive text on the right. The text continues the narrative from the top section.

Figure 25: Comparison of the Tint of the Manuscript Authors' Writing of the Verses and Hieratic Characters

75. istee the same: Having been a follower of righteousness,  
desiring ~~to be~~ one who possessed great  
Vindalceff; a greater follower of righteous-  
ness; <sup>a possessor of greater knowledge;</sup> a father of many nations; a prince  
of peace; one who keeps the commandments of  
God; a rightful heir; a high priest, holding  
the right belonging to the fathers, from the be-  
ginning of time; even from the beginning, or  
before the foundation of the earth, down to  
the present time; even the right of the first  
born, or the first man, who is Adam,  
or first father, through <sup>the</sup> fathers, unto Me.  
I sought for mine appointment unto the  
priesthood according to the appointment  
of God, unto the fathers, concerning the  
seed.  
60. my fathers having turned from their  
righteousness, and from the holy com-

## **E. The Egyptian Alphabet Documents Establish that the Small Sensen Portion of the Breathing Permit is the Source of the Book of Abraham**

Smith and his scribes prepared a total of four Egyptian Alphabets (EAs). (**Fig. 1**).<sup>81</sup> The EAs are, as they sound, an attempt by Smith and his scribes to provide an alphabet of the Egyptian language. They consist of hieroglyphics and hieratic characters in the left margin and a translation of the characters to the right. The EAs are as follows:

- EA-JS – written by Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery
- EA-OC - written by Oliver Cowdery
- EA-WWP - written by William W Phelps
- EA-GAEL – written by William W Phelps, but at a later time than the preceding three, and it covers different characters than the preceding three cover.

The first three EAs are very similar to each other and cover essentially the same Egyptian characters. The fourth was written at a later time and offers a translation of different characters. The first three EAs offer a translation of the hieroglyphics in the four columns of the Facsimile 1 fragment. (**Fig. 26**).<sup>828384</sup> At the end of the EAs, after the translation of the Facsimile 1 fragment characters is complete, two additional characters appear on the EAs.<sup>85</sup> (**Fig 27**).<sup>86</sup> These two characters are translated as “Chaldeans” and “Abraham.” At the beginning of Manuscript 2, we find these same two characters and the same translations (Abraham 1:1 mentions “Chaldeans” and “Abraham”). **Figure 28**<sup>87</sup> shows these last two characters and translations as they appear on the EA-JS and EA-OC and **Figure 27**<sup>88</sup> shows how they appear on EA-WWP.<sup>89</sup>

To reiterate, from the EAs it is evident that Smith finished translating the hieroglyphics from the Facsimile 1 fragment and moved on to the next part of the scroll – the Small Sensen. He added two characters at the end of the EAs and used these same characters to begin the Small Sensen, as indicated in Manuscript 2 where these two characters appear at the beginning of the manuscript and are translated into Abraham 1:1. Further evidence of this link is the fact that Smith translated these two characters at the end of the EA as “Chaldeans” and “Abraham” and this same translation appears in Abraham 1:1 on Manuscript 2.

## **F. The Missing Papyrus Theory Fails to Explain the Mistranslations and Incorrect Restorations of the Facsimiles**

As explained above, the Missing Papyrus Theory fails as evidenced by textual references in the Book of Abraham to Facsimile 1, the length of the Breathing Permit scroll, the manuscripts of the Book of Abraham,

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<sup>81</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>82</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>83</sup> While nearly every hieroglyphic from the Facsimile 1 fragment is recorded in the columns of the EAs, the translations are sporadic. Some pages of the EAs offer a translation for nearly every character while other pages offer only one or two translations; The columns shown here are from EA-JS.

<sup>84</sup> The far right column is reflected on page 7 and 9 of EA-JS, pages 5 and 7 of EA-WWP, and page 6 of EA-OC. The second from the right column is reflected on page 7 of EA-JS, page 5 of EA-WWP, and page 6 of EA-OC. The third column from the right is reflected on page 4 and 7 of EA-JS, pages 3 and 5 of EA-WWP, and on pages 4 and 6 of EA-OC. The far left column is reflected on page 8 of EA-JS, page 7 of EA-WWP, and page 8 of EA-OC.

<sup>85</sup> Of the three original manuscripts, only 2 starts with Abraham 1:1, Manuscripts 1a and 1b start with Abraham 1:4.

<sup>86</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>87</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>88</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>89</sup> Note that while both EA-JS and EA-OC show both characters, only one of the characters is translated in each (“Abraham” in EA-JS and “Chaldeans” in EA-OC).

and the Egyptian Alphabets. Furthermore, the Missing Papyrus Theory completely fails to account for Smith's mistranslation of the facsimiles and incorrect restoration of the facsimiles.

**Figure 26: EA-JS Translation of the Hieroglyphics Found in the Columns of the Facsimile 1 Fragment**



**Figure 27: EA-WWP Translation of Last the Two Characters Matching With Abraham 1:1 in Manuscript 2**

Facsimile 1  
Fragment



EA-WWP



Manuscript 2  
of the Book  
of Abraham

1:1



1:1



Abraham 1:1 - In the land of the Chaldeans, at the residence of my fathers, I, Abraham, saw that it was needful for me to obtain another place of residence;

La ki on Shish, Kulsidor, hisk - The land of the Chaldees  
 La ki on hisk Ah-brak cam. The father of the father  
 the first of the first, who is cam  
 mitted.

**Figure 28: End of EA-JS and EA-OC Showing Last Two Characters Translated as “Abraham” and “Chaldeans”**

EA-JS

Ah-bra-am  
Ah-bra-am.

*The father of the faithful - The first night - The elder*

*In the first degree Ah-bra-am - signifies the father of the faithful, the first night, the elder second degree - same sound - A follower of righteousness - This degree - Same sound - One who possesses great knowledge - Same degree - same sound - A follower of righteousness, a possessor of greater knowledge.*

*Third degree - Ah-bra-am - The father of many nations, a prince of peace, one who keeps the commandments of God, a patriarch, a righteous heir, a high priest.*

EA-OC

Chaldeans.

*Zakkidanish, or Kalsidanish - The Land of the*



## VI. THE CATALYST THEORY FAILS

The second theory proposed in the 1988 Ensign article, and which is often put forward by apologists, is the Catalyst Theory. This theory distances the papyri from the Book of Abraham by proposing that the creation of the Book of Abraham was *not* a result of a translation of the characters on the papyri. Instead, the papyri acted merely as a catalyst, or a sort of signal, to Smith to translate the Book of Abraham through *revelation*. In other words, the source of the Book of Abraham was not the papyri, but rather pure revelation from God.

### A. The Catalyst Theory Fails for Many of the Same Reasons the Missing Papyrus Theory Fails

Like the Missing Papyrus Theory, this theory fails for numerous reasons. It is disproven by the following:

1. Smith's translation and restoration of the facsimiles was incorrect. If the Catalyst Theory is correct, then God must be responsible for instructing Smith to incorrectly translate and restore the facsimiles. (See Section III).
2. The text of the Book of Abraham itself (1:12 and 1:14) declares that the source of the Book of Abraham has the Facsimile 1 fragment at its commencement, which is the Breathing Permit of Hor. If the Catalyst Theory is correct, then God must be responsible for instructing Smith to record verses in the Book of Abraham that incorrectly refer to the Facsimile 1 fragment. (See Section V-B).
3. The Small Sensen characters are copied in order into the manuscripts where they are translated into the Book of Abraham. Therefore, Smith's own manuscripts indicate that the source of the Book of Abraham is the Small Sensen. If the Catalyst Theory is correct, then God must be responsible for misleading Smith to believe that the source of the Book of Abraham was the Small Sensen. (See Section V-D).
4. The Egyptian Alphabets end with two characters which appear in the manuscripts as the beginning of the Small Sensen and which translate into Abraham 1:1. Therefore, the EAs indicate that the source of the Book of Abraham is the Small Sensen. If the Catalyst Theory is correct, then God must be responsible for misleading Smith to believe that the source of the Book of Abraham was the Small Sensen. (See Section V-E).

Also, Smith declared that the characters on the papyri were written by Abraham's "own hand" in his "handwriting" and that the papyri contained his "signature." If the Catalyst Theory is correct, then God must be responsible for misleading Smith about the identity of the author of the papyri characters. (See Section II).

### B. Anachronisms in the text of the Book of Abraham Further Disprove the Catalyst Theory

Abraham lived sometime between 2400 BC and 1500 BC.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, if the Book of Abraham is truly a work of Abraham, the text should reflect this time period. If the text contains references to things that did not exist until after his lifetime, then these anachronisms would indicate that the book is not attributable to Abraham. For example, if a person presents a diary and argues that it is George Washington's diary but the diary includes references to the internet, then these anachronisms indicate that it is obviously not George Washington's diary.

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<sup>90</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

The Book of Abraham contains numerous anachronisms, indicating that Abraham was not the author of the book and indicating that Smith was wrong in attributing the book to him. In the short 15 pages of the Book of Abraham, there are an astounding 36 occurrences of anachronisms. They are as follows:

- References to Facsimile 1<sup>91</sup> (marked in **Fig. 29** in yellow)
  - Abraham 1:12, 14
  - The Facsimile 1 Fragment wasn't created until at least 1,000-1,900 years after the lifetime of Abraham.
- Chaldea<sup>92</sup> (marked in **Fig. 29** in red)
  - Abraham 1:1, 8, 13, 14, 20 (twice), 23, 29, 30, 2:1, 2:4 2:15, 3:1
  - Chaldeans were a people who came about in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century BC.
  - The city of Ur could only be considered "of the Chaldees" from the 10<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, BC.
- Pharaoh<sup>93</sup> (marked in **Fig. 29** in blue)
  - Facsimile 1 explanation, 1:6, 1:7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 20 (two times), 25, 26, 27 (twice), Facsimile 3 explanation (three times).
  - The term "Pharaoh" is not attested as a title for the ruler of Egypt until 1560 BC at the very earliest. Therefore, this isn't definitively anachronistic but probably is.
- Potiphar<sup>94</sup> (marked in **Fig. 29** in green)
  - Abraham 1:10, 20.
  - The form of this word isn't attested until the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC.
- Egyptus<sup>95</sup> (marked in **Fig. 29** in purple)
  - Abraham 1:23, 25
  - Egyptus is first used around 1375 BC and is a man's name.

The existence of anachronisms throughout the Book of Abraham disproves the Catalyst Theory. If the Catalyst Theory is correct, then God must be responsible for directing Smith to include anachronisms in the Book of Abraham.

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<sup>91</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

<sup>92</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

<sup>93</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

<sup>94</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> [https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue\\_V28N01\\_155.pdf](https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V28N01_155.pdf)



## **VII. THE CHURCH HAS REVISED HISTORY IN AN ATTEMPT TO MINIMIZE THE DEVASTATING IMPLICATIONS OF THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM**

As discussed earlier, the first indication that Smith’s translation of the Book of Abraham was incorrect came to light in 1861 when Deveria’s correct translation of the facsimiles was published in English. Since then, the church has twice attempted to rewrite history in an effort to minimize the gravity of the Book of Abraham problems. First, the church altered Facsimile 2 in order to hide the fact that Smith had identified as “God” a pagan god of fertility with an erect penis. Second, the church altered the introduction to the Pearl of Great Price in a disingenuous effort to distance the Book of Abraham from the papyri.

### **A. The Church Edited Facsimile 2 in the Book of Abraham to Remove Min’s Penis**

As discussed earlier, Facsimile 2 is a copy of a hypocephalus which was part of the Book of the Dead belonging to Sheshonk. The first known drawing of Facsimile 2 was done by Smith’s scribe, Willard Richards, in 1841 or 1842. (**Fig. 10**<sup>96</sup>, **Fig. 30**<sup>97</sup>). As discussed above in section III-C, Smith subsequently had the Book of Abraham printed, including Facsimile 2, in the church’s Times and Seasons newspaper. (**Fig. 31**<sup>98</sup>, **Fig. 32**<sup>99</sup>). As can be seen in **Figure 32**<sup>100</sup>, Smith identified Figure 7 in Facsimile 2 as “God sitting upon his throne.” Egyptologists later identified this, however, as Min – a pagan God of fertility with an erect penis. **Figure 33**<sup>101</sup> shows how Min appears in both Facsimile 2 and another hypocephalus depicting Min with his erect penis.

In 1851, the Book of Abraham was published a second time in a group of Smith’s teachings put together for the saints in Britain and called “The Pearl of Great Price.”<sup>102</sup> (**Fig. 34**).<sup>103</sup> In 1855, the Book of Abraham was published in another church newspaper, the Deseret News. (**Fig. 35**).<sup>104</sup> The next publication of the Book of Abraham was in 1878 when the church published a new edition of the Pearl of Great Price. (**Fig. 36**).<sup>105</sup>

Between the 1855 publication and the 1878 publication of the Book of Abraham, Egyptologist Theodule Deveria’s translation of the facsimiles was published in English in 1861 in a book titled, “A Journey to Great Salt Lake City.”<sup>106</sup> His translation was published a second time in English in the 1873 book, “The Rocky Mountain Saints.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>97</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>98</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org>

<sup>99</sup> <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9200>

<sup>100</sup> <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NCMP1820-1846/id/9200>

<sup>101</sup> [http://nowscape.com/mormon/hypocephalus/BOA\\_Hypocephalus\\_nowscape.html](http://nowscape.com/mormon/hypocephalus/BOA_Hypocephalus_nowscape.html)

<sup>102</sup> A chronology of the publications of the Book of Abraham can be found here - <https://www.lds.org/scriptures/pgp/introduction>, and here - <http://www.boap.org/LDS/BOAP/SecondEd/Draft-copy/AppendixVI-JS-Commentary-on-BOA.pdf>

<sup>103</sup> [http://www.ldharvest.com/bom1edition/enlarge/dccontents\\_large.asp](http://www.ldharvest.com/bom1edition/enlarge/dccontents_large.asp)

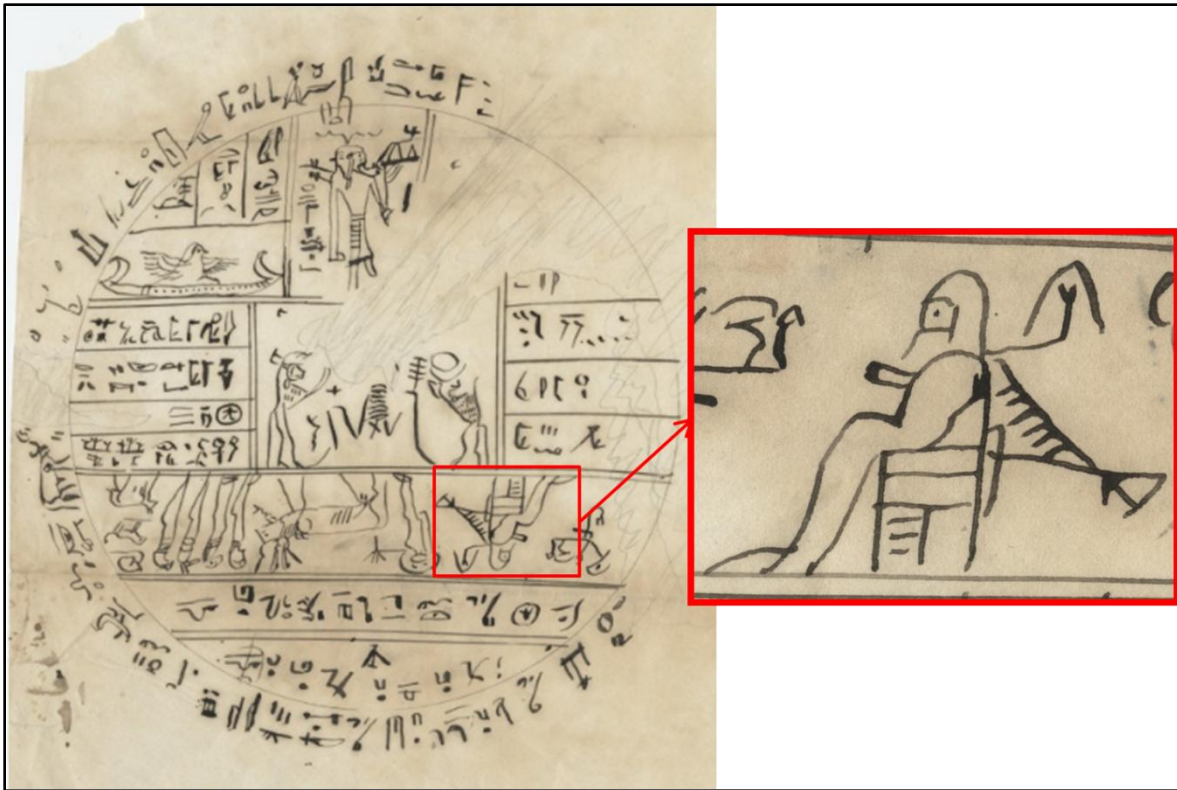
<sup>104</sup> <http://udn.lib.utah.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/deseretnews1/id/2308/rec/34>

<sup>105</sup> [http://www.ebay.com/itm/PEARL-OF-GREAT-PRICE-FIRST-AMERICAN-EDITION-1878-VERY-SCARCE-/271309003780?pt=Antiquarian\\_Collectible&hash=item3f2b46dc04](http://www.ebay.com/itm/PEARL-OF-GREAT-PRICE-FIRST-AMERICAN-EDITION-1878-VERY-SCARCE-/271309003780?pt=Antiquarian_Collectible&hash=item3f2b46dc04)

<sup>106</sup> <https://archive.org/stream/journeytogreatsa02remy#page/540/mode/2up>

<sup>107</sup> <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924029474073#page/n551/mode/2up>

**Figure 30: First Known Drawing of Facsimile 2**

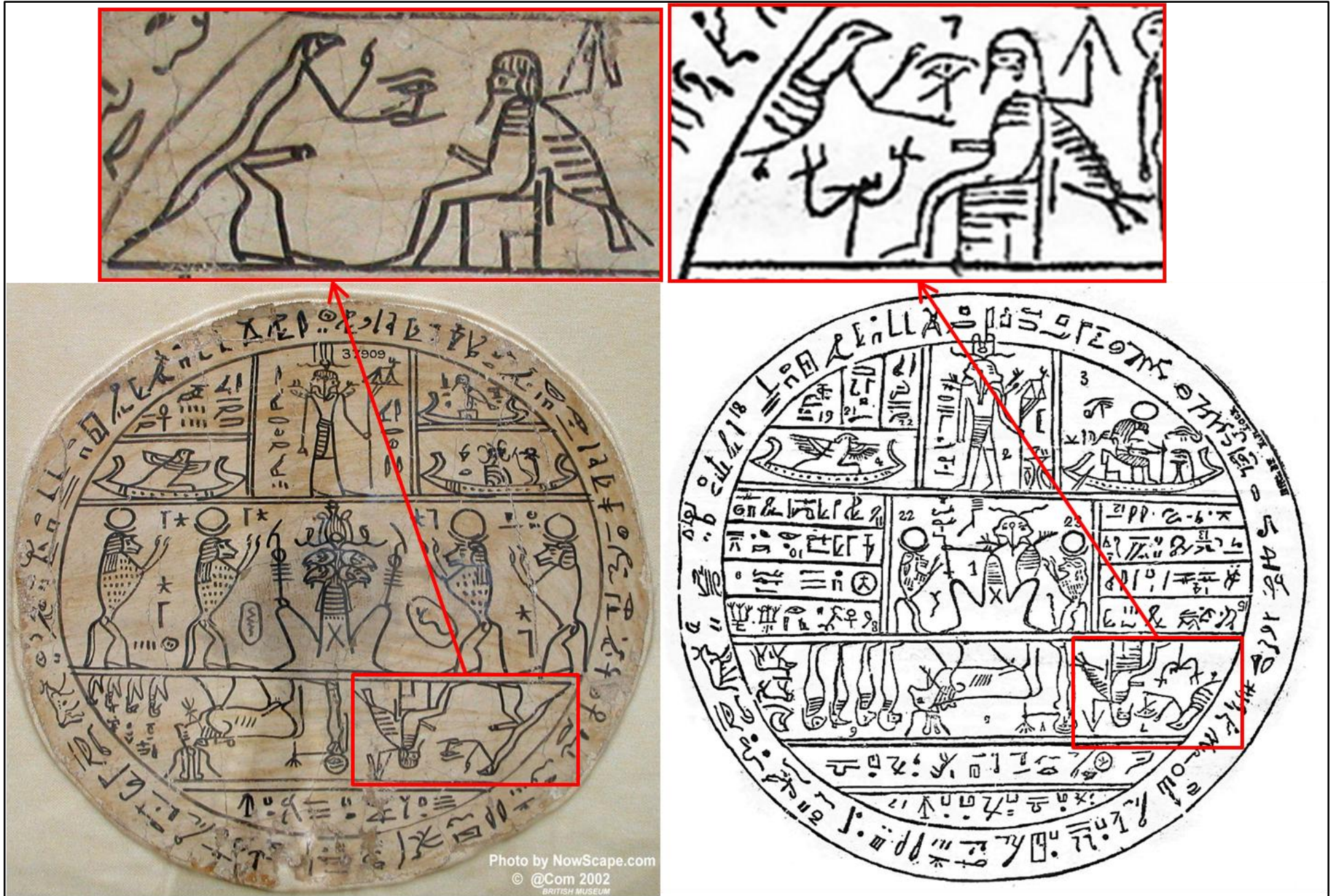


**Figure 31: Facsimile 2 Woodcut for Printing in the Times and Seasons**

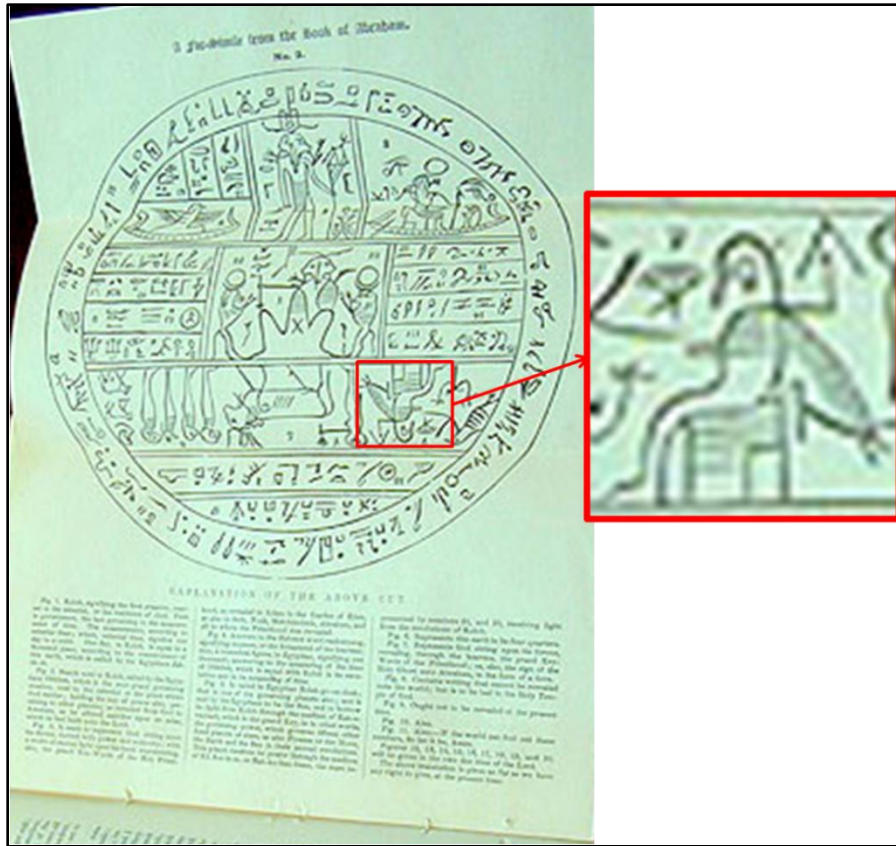




**Figure 33: Min as he Appears in Facsimile 2 and Another Hypocephalus**



**Figure 34: Facsimile 2 Printed in 1851 Pearl of Great Price**

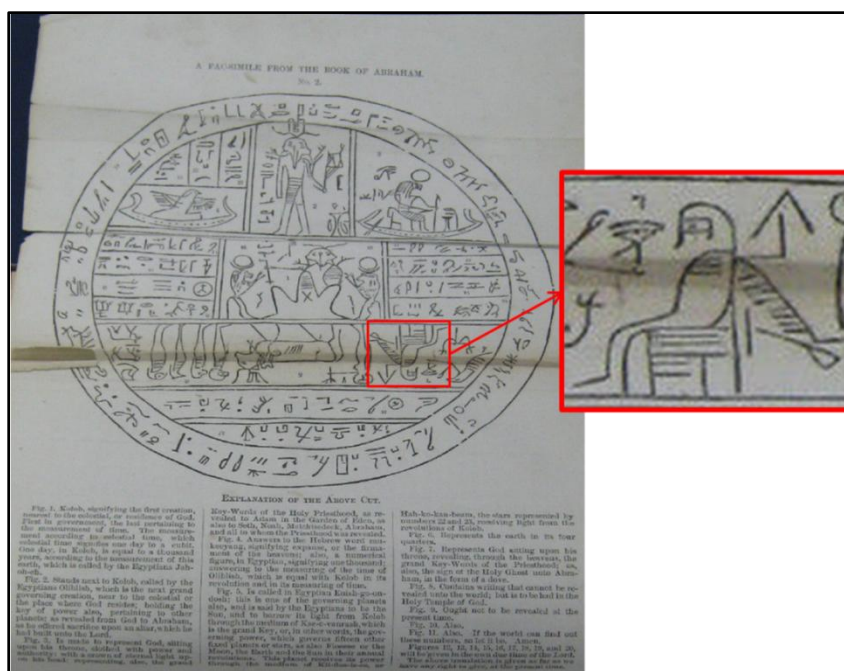


**Figure 35: Facsimile 2 Printed in August 22, 1855 Edition of the Deseret News**





**Figure 36: Facsimile 2 Printed in 1878 Pearl of Great Price (Penis Removed)**



Deveria explained, among other things, that the figures in Facsimile 2 which Smith identified as “God sitting upon his throne, revealing through the heavens the grand Key-Words of the Priesthood; as, also, the sign of the Holy Ghost unto Abraham in the form of a dove” were really “The form of Ammon, with a bird's tail, or Horammon (?). An ithyphallic [having an erect penis] serpent, with human legs, offers him a symbolical eye.” Therefore, what Smith identified as God is actually a pagan God of fertility named Ammon (also known as Min, Horammon, Amun-Min, etc.) and what Smith identified as the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove is actually a serpent with human legs and an erect penis. Interestingly, Deveria only explicitly identifies the serpent as having an erect penis, not Min as well, but perhaps further inquiry by church leaders led them to understand that Min, too, had an erect penis. In any case, church leaders apparently discovered that the figure Smith identified as “God” was really a pagan God of fertility with an erection and were embarrassed by Smith’s erroneous translation as evidenced by the removal of Min’s penis in subsequent editions of the Pearl of Great Price.

Min’s penis was present in Facsimile 2 up until the 1878 edition when it was removed. (Fig. 36).<sup>108</sup> Min’s penis continued to be edited out of subsequent editions of the Pearl of Great Price until it was finally restored 98 years later in 1976: Figure 37<sup>109110</sup> shows how Facsimile 2 was printed in the next two editions of the Pearl of Great Price – the 1902 and 1921 editions. The next edition of the Pearl of Great Price came out in 1976<sup>111</sup> and restored Min’s penis. The penis has remained in the subsequent 1979,<sup>112</sup> 1981,<sup>113</sup> and 2013<sup>114</sup> editions of the Pearl of Great Price. (Fig. 37).<sup>115</sup>

<sup>108</sup> [http://www.ebay.com/itm/PEARL-OF-GREAT-PRICE-FIRST-AMERICAN-EDITION-1878-VERY-SCARCE-/271309003780?pt=Antiquarian\\_Collectible&hash=item3f2b46dc04](http://www.ebay.com/itm/PEARL-OF-GREAT-PRICE-FIRST-AMERICAN-EDITION-1878-VERY-SCARCE-/271309003780?pt=Antiquarian_Collectible&hash=item3f2b46dc04)

<sup>109</sup> <http://archive.org/stream/pearlofgreatpric00smit#page/62/mode/2up>

<sup>110</sup> The 1921 edition is represented here by a 1973 edition which I have in my possession. The 1921 edition remained unchanged until 1976.

<sup>111</sup> I do not currently have a photograph of this.

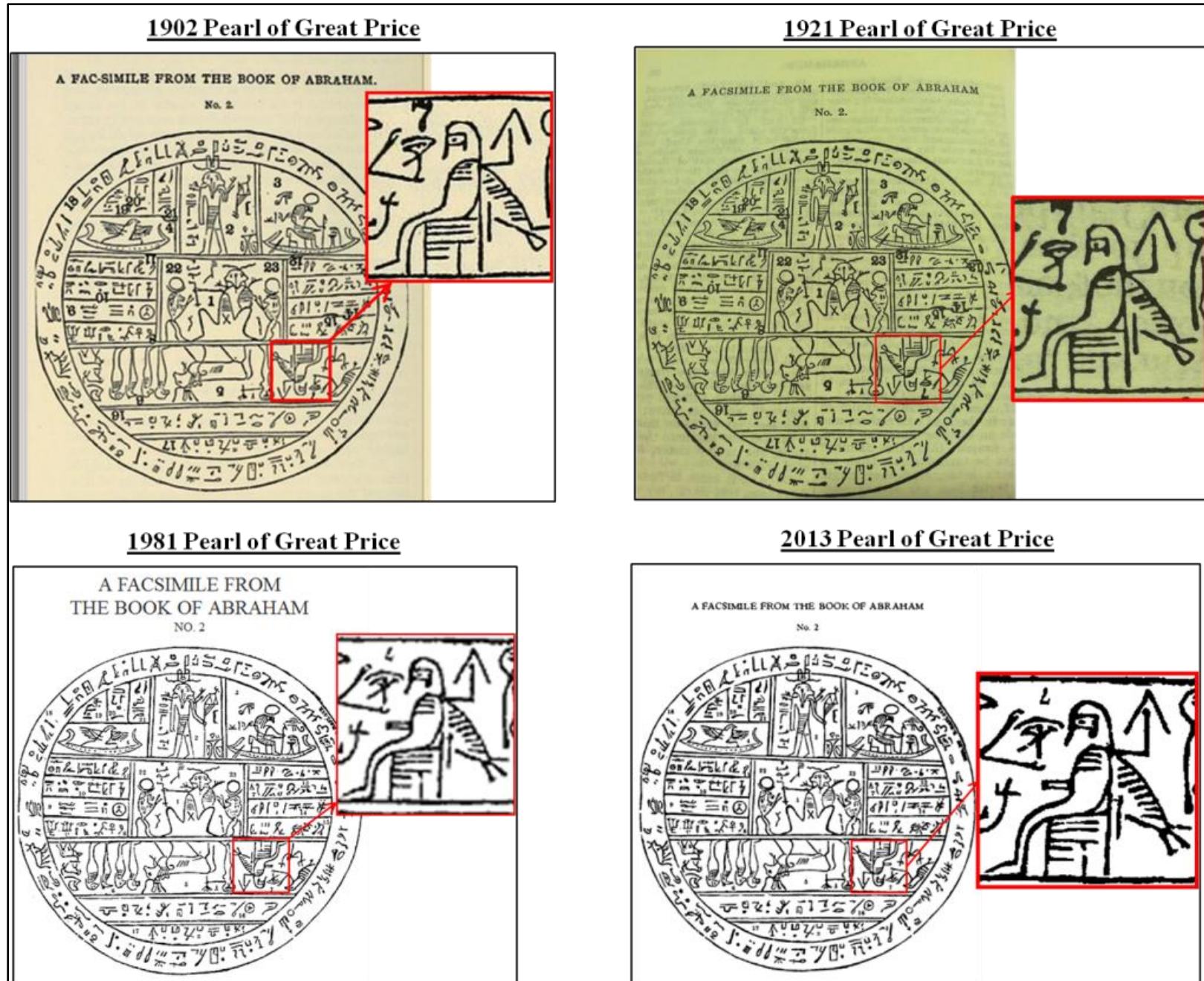
<sup>112</sup> I do not currently have a photograph of this.

<sup>113</sup> [http://classic.scripts.lds.org/en/abr/fac\\_2](http://classic.scripts.lds.org/en/abr/fac_2)

<sup>114</sup> <http://media.ldscloud.org/pdf/lds-scriptures/triple-combination/triple-combination-eng.pdf>

<sup>115</sup> <http://archive.org/stream/pearlofgreatpric00smit#page/62/mode/2up>; The 1921 edition is represented here by a 1973 edition which I have in my possession. The 1921 edition remained unchanged until 1976.

**Figure 37: Facsimile 2 Printed in 1902-2013 Editions of the Pearl of Great Price**



## B. The Church Edited the Pearl of Great Price Introduction to the Book of Abraham

The Pearl of Great Price was first published in 1851 and contained, among other books, the Book of Abraham. Two introductions of the Book of Abraham were contained in the Pearl of Great Price. First, the Book of Abraham contained its own introduction, and second, the Pearl of Great Price, in listing its contents, also contained an introduction to the Book of Abraham. So as to avoid confusion, the Book of Abraham's own introduction will be referred to here as "the Book of Abraham introduction" and the Pearl of Great Price's introduction to the Book of Abraham will be referred to here as "the Pearl of Great Price introduction to the Book of Abraham."

While the Book of Abraham introduction has remained relatively unchanged since Smith first published it in 1842, the Pearl of Great Price introduction to the Book of Abraham was changed dramatically in 2013.

### 1. The Book of Abraham Introduction Has Remained Relatively Unchanged

As briefly mentioned in section II-A, the 1835 Manuscript 2 begins with the introduction, "Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the CataCombs of Egypt." (**Fig. 38**).<sup>116</sup> In Smith's first publication of the Book of Abraham in 1842, the introduction states,

"A Translation Of some ancient Records that have fallen into our hands, from the Catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham, while he was in Egypt, called the BOOK OF ABRAHAM, written by his own hand, upon papyrus."<sup>117</sup>

This introduction remained identical in the 1851 Pearl of Great Price,<sup>118</sup> the 1855 printing of the Book of Abraham in the Deseret News newspaper,<sup>119</sup> and the 1857 printing of the Book of Abraham in the Millennial Star newspaper.<sup>120</sup> In 1878, the Book of Abraham introduction was changed to remove the words "purporting to be."<sup>121</sup> The 1878 edition of the Book of Abraham introduction has appeared in every subsequent edition of the Pearl of Great Price and has remained unchanged.

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<sup>116</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

<sup>117</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/book-of-abraham-early-1842?dm=image-and-text&zm=zoom-inner&tm=expanded&p=2&s=undefined&sm=none>

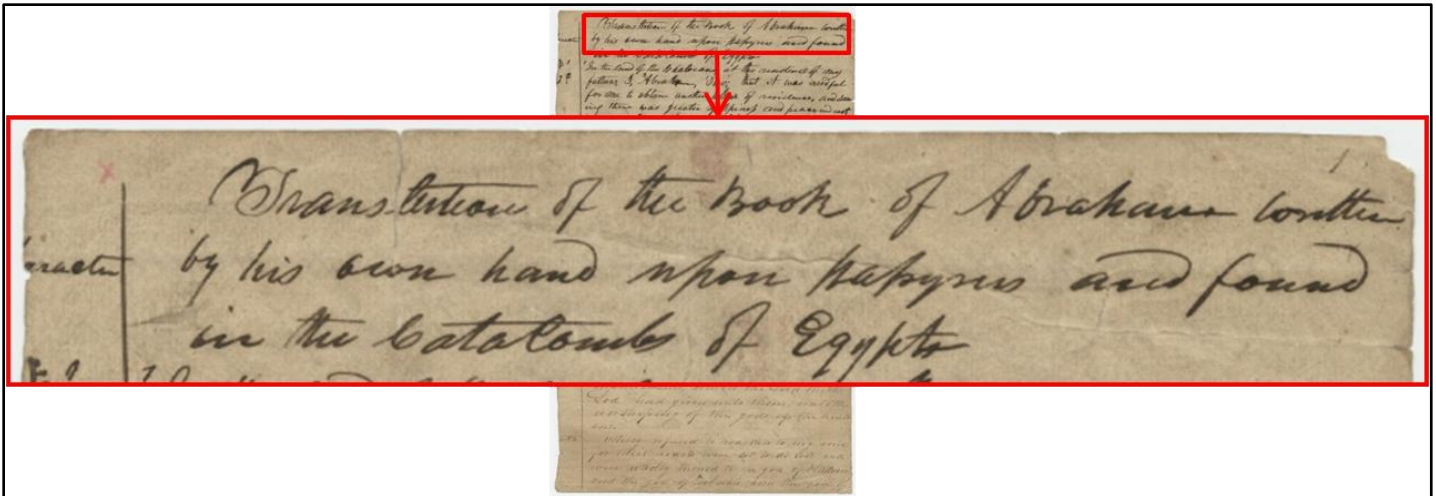
<sup>118</sup> <http://www.thebookofabraham.info/PGP%201851.pdf>

<sup>119</sup> <http://udn.lib.utah.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/deseretnews1/id/2191/rec/32>

<sup>120</sup> February 14, 1857 edition, History of Joseph Smith, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/MStar/id/2993/rec/19>

<sup>121</sup> <http://books.google.com/books/reader?id=LGkTGpfxit4C&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PA26>

**Figure 38: Manuscript 2**



2. The Pearl of Great Price Introduction to the Book of Abraham Was Changed Significantly in 2013

The first edition of the Pearl of Great Price, published in 1851, contained a contents page which introduced the contents, including the Book of Abraham. It explained that the Book of Abraham was,

“A Translation Of some ancient Records, that have fallen into our hands from the Catacombs of Egypt, purporting to be the writings of Abraham while he was in Egypt, called the Book of Abraham, written by his own hand upon papyrus. Translated from the papyrus by Joseph Smith.”<sup>122</sup>

The second and third editions of the Pearl of Great price, published in 1878 and 1902 respectively, contained an identical introduction to the Book of Abraham, other than the removal of “purporting to be.”<sup>123</sup> The subsequent 1921, 1976, and 1979 editions of the Pearl of Great Price contained no introduction to the Book of Abraham. The Pearl of Great Price introduction to the Book of Abraham appeared again in the 1981 edition of the Pearl of Great Price. The 1981 Pearl of Great Price introduction to the Book of Abraham was changed slightly from the 1902 introduction, but still contained the same basic information:

“A translation from some Egyptian papyri that came into the hands of Joseph Smith in 1835, containing writings of the patriarch Abraham. The translation was published serially in the *Times and Seasons* beginning March 1, 1842, at Nauvoo, Illinois. See *History of the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 519-534.”<sup>124</sup>

Therefore, up until 2013, every edition of the Pearl of Great Price’s introduction to the Book of Abraham declared that 1) Smith translated the papyri, 2) the source of the Book of Abraham was the papyri, and 3) that the papyri literally contained Abraham’s writing. The church backed away from all three of these claims in the new 2013 edition of the Pearl of Great Price which declares the Book of Abraham to be,

<sup>122</sup> <http://www.thebookofabraham.info/PGP%201851.pdf>

<sup>123</sup> 1878 edition: <http://books.google.com/books/reader?id=LGkTGPFxit4C&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&pg=GBS.PP11>;

1902 edition: <http://archive.org/stream/pearlofgreatpric00smit/page/n9/mode/2up>

<sup>124</sup> <http://classic.scriptures.lds.org/en/pgp/introduction>

“An inspired translation of the writings of Abraham. Joseph Smith began the translation in 1835 after obtaining some Egyptian papyri. The translation was published serially in the Times and Seasons beginning March 1, 1842, at Nauvoo, Illinois.”

The new introduction is changed significantly in four ways:

1. It is No Longer Claimed that Smith Translated the Papyri: The introduction previously stated, “A translation from some Egyptian papyri,” thus asserting that Smith in fact translated the papyri. The new introduction, however, backs away from this assertion and instead declares that the translation was simply a translation of the “writings of Abraham” and that this translation occurred “after obtaining some Egyptian papyri.” Therefore, the church has backed away from claiming that Smith translated the papyri at all.
2. It is No Longer Claimed that the Papyri Were the Source: The introduction previously identified the papyri as the source of the Book of Abraham by asserting that the Book of Abraham was, “A translation from some Egyptian papyri....” The new introduction, however, states that the source of Book of Abraham is “the writings of Abraham.” There is no longer any identification of the source of the Book of Abraham.
3. It is No Longer Claimed that the Papyri Contained Abraham’s Writing: The previous assertion that the papyri “contain[ed] writings of the patriarch Abraham” is completely removed. Thus, the church has also backed away from its claim that Abraham’s writing appeared on the papyri.
4. It is Now an Inspired Translation: “Translation” is replaced with “inspired translation,” suggesting that Smith’s translation was accomplished with God’s inspiration.

These changes back away from what Smith himself claimed the papyri to be and what the church claimed the papyri to be for 162 years in every edition of the Pearl of Great Price since 1851 that included an introduction to the Book of Abraham.

A. Backing Away from the Claim that Smith Translated the Papyri and Backing Away from the Claim that the Papyri are the Source of the Book of Abraham is Untenable

It is indisputable that Smith translated the papyri, albeit incorrectly, and that the papyri were the source of the Book of Abraham. This is demonstrated by the following evidence:

- Manuscript 2 states that that the Book of Abraham is a, “Translation of the Book of Abraham written by his own hand upon papyrus and found in the CataCombs of Egypt.”<sup>125</sup> (**Fig. 38**).<sup>126</sup> (Section VII –B1).
- In the 171 year history of the publication of the Book of Abraham, every printing has started with an introduction claiming that Smith translated the papyri and that the papyri were the source of the Book of Abraham. (Section VII-B1).

<sup>125</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

<sup>126</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

- Even the 2013 edition of the Book of Abraham begins with an introduction claiming that the Book of Abraham was a translation of the papyri. (Section VII-B1).
- In the 162 year history of the publication of the Pearl of Great Price, every edition before 2013 that contained an introduction to the Book of Abraham has always claimed that Smith translated the papyri and that the papyri were the source of the Book of Abraham. (Section VII-B2).
- Smith translated the facsimiles from the papyri. (Section III).
- Smith declared that the characters on the papyri were written by Abraham's "own hand," in his "handwriting," and that the papyri contained his "signature." (Section II).
- In verses 1:12 and 1:14 of the text of the Book of Abraham, the Facsimile 1 fragment is referenced. (Section V-B).
- The three 1835 manuscripts contain the Small Sense characters taken from the papyri. (Section V-D).
- Smith stated on numerous occasions that he was in fact translating the papyri and that the papyri were in fact the source of the Book of Abraham. Some examples include the following:<sup>127</sup>

"...with W.W. Phelps and Oliver Cowdery as scribes, I commenced the translation of some of the characters or hieroglyphics, and much to our joy found that one of the rolls contained the writings of Abraham, another the writings of Joseph of Egypt, etc., — a more full account of which will appear in its place, as I proceed to examine or unfold them. Truly we can say, the Lord is beginning to reveal the abundance of peace and truth." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 236).

"This afternoon I labored on the Egyptian alphabet, in company with Brothers Oliver Cowdery and W. W. Phelps, and during the research, the principles of astronomy as understood by Father Abraham and the ancients unfolded to our understanding, the particulars of which will appear hereafter." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 286).

"This afternoon I re-commenced translating from the ancient records." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 289).

"The remainder of this month, I was continually engaged in translating an alphabet of the Book of Abraham, and arranging a grammar of the Egyptian language as practiced by the ancients." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 238).

"At home. Spent the forenoon instructing those that called to inquire concerning the things of God in the last days. In the afternoon we translated some of the Egyptian records." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 320).

"Spent the day translating." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 320).

"At home. We spent the day in transcribing Egyptian characters from the papyrus. I am severely afflicted with a cold." (*History of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 320-21).

Thus, backing away from the claim that Smith translated the papyri and backing away from the claim that the papyri are the source of the Book of Abraham is untenable.

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<sup>127</sup> <https://byustudies.byu.edu/hc/hcpgs/hc.aspx>

B. Backing Away from the Claim that the Papyri Contained the Writing of Abraham is Untenable

It is indisputable that both Smith, and the church after his death, claimed that the papyri literally contained the writing of Abraham. This is demonstrated by the following evidence:

- Manuscript 2 states that papyri contained the writings of Abraham and that the writings were written, “by his own hand upon papyrus....”<sup>128</sup> (**Fig. 38**).<sup>129</sup> (Section VII –B1).
- Smith declared that the characters on the papyri were written by Abraham’s “own hand,” in his “handwriting,” and that the papyri contained his “signature.” (Section II).
- In the 171 year history of the publication of the Book of Abraham, every printing has started with an introduction claiming that the papyri contained the “writings of Abraham...written by his own hand, upon papyrus.” (Section VII-B1).
- Even the Book of Abraham in the 2013 edition of the Pearl of Great Price begins with an introduction claiming that the papyri contained the “writings of Abraham...written by his own hand, upon papyrus.” (Section VII-B1).
- In the 162 year history of the publication of the Pearl of Great Price, every edition before 2013 that included an introduction to the Book of Abraham has always claimed that the papyri contained the writings of Abraham. (Section VII-B2).

Thus, backing away from the claim that the papyri contained the writing of Abraham is untenable.

C. The Changes to the 2013 Pearl of Great Price Introduction to the Book of Abraham Allow For the Catalyst Theory to be Asserted; However, the Catalyst Theory Fails

For the reasons listed above, the changes to the Pearl of Great Price Introduction to the Book of Abraham are untenable, but by no longer asserting that 1) Smith translated the papyri, 2) the source of the Book of Abraham was the papyri, and 3) that the papyri literally contained Abraham’s writing, the church has allowed for the Catalyst Theory to be asserted.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, the change from “translation” to “inspired translation” also suggests a move towards the Catalyst Theory which asserts that the source of the Book of Abraham is inspiration rather than the papyri. In any case, the Catalyst Theory fails for numerous reasons. (See Section VI).

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The Book of Abraham stands unique among Mormon scripture as the only scripture in the Mormon canon for which the source is still available for examination. As such, Smith’s claims of being a prophet, seer,

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<sup>128</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

<sup>129</sup> <http://josephsmithpapers.org/paperSummary/william-w-phelps-and-warren-parrish-copy-of-abraham-manuscript-summer-fall-1835-abraham-11-218>

<sup>130</sup> The Missing Papyrus Theory does not contradict any of the past Book of Abraham introductions or Pearl of Great Price Introductions to the Book of Abraham. However, as discussed in Section IV, the Missing Papyrus Theory Fails for numerous other reasons.

revelator, and translator of ancient languages can be tested by examining the accuracy of his translation of the papyri. The result of such an examination provides overwhelming proof that Smith was utterly unable to translate.

Smith claimed that the papyri contained the literal handwriting and words of Abraham, but even the church now agrees that this is impossible given that the papyri were not created until at least 1,000-1,900 years after the lifetime of Abraham. Also, Smith's translation and restoration of the facsimiles, which included such blunders as mistaking female figures as male and drawing in upside-down hieratic characters instead of hieroglyphics, has been described by Egyptologists as "a farrago of nonsense from beginning to end," an "impudent fraud," "comical," and "undoubtedly the work of pure imagination." In recognizing that Smith was utterly unable to translate the papyri, apologists and the church have attempted to save face by distancing the papyri from the Book of Abraham in two new defenses.

First, the Missing Papyrus Theory suggests that the source of the Book of Abraham is either a missing part of the Breathing Permit scroll or a different scroll altogether. This theory fails for numerous reasons including the fact that the Book of Abraham text itself refers to the Facsimile 1 fragment which is the start of the Breathing Permit scroll. Also, all three of the 1835 manuscripts of the Book of Abraham include in their margins the Small Sense characters as they appear in order in the Breathing Permit. Yet, none of the Breathing Permit that is extant is the source of the Book of Abraham and the missing portion is more than 13 times too small to contain the Book of Abraham. Finally, the Missing Papyrus Theory still fails to account for incorrectly translated and incorrectly restored facsimiles.

Second, the Catalyst Theory suggests that the source of the Book of Abraham is not the papyrus at all but is instead pure revelation from God. This theory submits that the prophetic translator himself, Joseph Smith, was confused and foolishly mistook the papyrus to be the source of the scripture. This theory arrogantly suggests that modern day church leaders and apologists know better than the divinely-appointed translator himself. It directly contradicts Smith's own statements and Smith's Book of Abraham introduction which states that the source of the Book of Abraham is the papyrus and that Abraham literally wrote with his own hand on the papyrus. This theory also contradicts the entirety of the overwhelming evidence that the Breathing Permit scroll specifically is the source of the Book of Abraham. Furthermore, it contradicts the portions of the Book of Abraham text itself which refer to the Facsimile 1 fragment. Importantly, the Catalyst Theory, like the Missing Papyrus Theory, fails to account for the erroneously translated and restored facsimiles. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Catalyst Theory fails to explain the 36 anachronisms present in the 15 page book. If the Catalyst Theory is correct, it must be concluded that God misled Smith by revealing anachronisms to him and directing him to attribute them to the ancient prophet Abraham.

The gravity of the Book of Abraham problems is apparent in the church's proposal of these two absurd defenses and is further highlighted by the church's attempts to revise history. For nearly 100 years, the church altered Smith's version of Facsimile 2 by editing out Min's erect penis. Thus, the church arrogantly placed its own opinion of the facsimile above that of the prophetic translator and divinely-appointed founder of the church himself.

The church also modified the Pearl of Great Price introduction to the Book of Abraham in 2013 to back away from three claims that Smith had made in his Book of Abraham introduction and which the church had maintained since 1835. Namely, that 1) Smith translated the papyri, 2) that the source of the Book of Abraham was the papyri, and 3) that the papyri literally contained Abraham's writing. Backing away from these claims is completely unsupported by Smith's own claims and the previous 178 years of claims made by the church. Backing away from these claims does allow the church to assert the Catalyst Theory, but the Catalyst Theory fails for a plethora of reasons. Thus, the church's attempts to revise history in an effort to explain away Smith's



inability to translate merely exchanges one problem of epic proportions - Smith's inability to translate, with another problem of epic proportions - the Catalyst Theory.

Ultimately, there are two possible explanations for the fact that Smith falsely claimed to have the prophetic ability to translate. He either fraudulently produced the Book of Abraham, or he acted without any intent to deceive but was nonetheless unable to differentiate between his own imagination and revelation.

The implications of the first possibility are obviously devastating for Mormonism. The implications of the second possibility are no less serious. If Smith was unable to differentiate between his own imagination and God's revelation of the translation of an entire book of scripture written by an ancient prophet, then everything Smith ever produced and claimed was received by revelation is put into question. If Smith, God's one true prophet on the earth, was he, himself, unable to discern by the Holy Ghost or otherwise whether the scriptures he produced were the product of his imagination or revelation, then how can any lay member of the church be any surer?

For these reasons, the Book of Abraham can accurately be described as the smoking gun of Mormonism.

Questions? Comments? Acclamations? Hate Mail?

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